Hafa Adai!

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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COVID-19 protocols strictly enforced at PH consular mission

Filipinos and their families that are scheduled to avail of services during the Philippine Consulate General-Guam's consular mission starting tomorrow are directed to adhere strictly to all COVID-19 regulations and protocols for everyone's safety and wellbeing.

The consular mission from March 18 to April 11, 2021, at the Philippine Honorary Consulate-CNMI Support Office at the Sun Palace Hotel Saipan, is expected to draw more than 2,500 Filipinos and their families.

See COVID-19 on Page 4

FBI collects tax documents from tax service company

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Federal Bureau of Investigation visited the accounting and tax service company RR & Associates Corp. for the CNMI yesterday for unknown reasons. Photos widely circulated on social media showed FBI agents taking boxes—later confirmed to be client information—from the RR & Associates Corp. office Garapan. It was not immediately learned what the visit was all about.

See FBI on Page 4

10K applicants for PUA 2.0

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The second round of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation has approximately 10,000 applicants, according to Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente.

In a text message interview with Benavente, she said that they are still verifying each application to ensure that the PUA program guidelines are being followed, to detect fraudulent claims, and to prevent overpayments of benefits.

See 10K on Page 4

CHCC modifies quarantine for returning residents

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. is modifying its quarantine protocols for returning residents who plan to home quarantine.

See CHCC on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 7pm, March 16, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,773	0	7,773
Recovered	7,612	4	7,616
Active	23	0	23
Deaths	133	1	134
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			133,928

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	156	0	156
Traced via Travel Screening	121	0	121
Traced via Community Screening	35	0	35
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			26,131*
Days since last community transmission			1

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Saipan:	Tinian:	Rota:
Dose 1: 11,557	Dose 1: 743	Dose 1: 843
Dose 2: 8,828	Dose 2: 268	Dose 2: 357

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

A VIEW OF GARAPAN

The view from the second deck of the Mariana Lighthouse on Navy Hill shows an expansive view of the entire downtown Garapan. The landmark, which has been renovated into a coffee shop, lounge, and barbecue hangout, had a soft-opening last Friday, in preparation for the grand opening on March 26.

BEA CABRERA

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Across the United States, air travel is recovering more quickly from the depths of the pandemic.
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LIFE & STYLE
Academy Awards nominations have gone to a historically diverse slate of films and actors.
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Local

House Ethics Committee continues probe of Guam delegate

By CHRIS MARQUETTE
CQ-ROLL CALL

WASHINGTON—After more than a year of investigating, the House Ethics Committee is still working to determine whether Guam Delegate Michael F.Q. San Nicolas misused campaign funds, accepted improper contributions and engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship with a member of his congressional staff.

The ethics panel is not usually quick to act on referrals from the Office of Congressional Ethics. For example, after it received a report concerning Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers in 2013, it took the committee six years to resolve the Washington state Republican's inappropriate use of funds.

It is unclear what progress the investigative subcommittee has made into the San Nicolas matter and when it will be completed.

John Paul Manuel, the former campaign chairman for San Nicolas, told the Office of Congressional Ethics that San Nicolas accepted $10,000 in unreported cash from a local businessman, Andrew Park, during his initial run for Congress. Campaigns are limited to accepting a maximum of $100 in cash from a particular source, according to the Federal Election Commission.

San Nicolas

San Nicolas, a Democrat, was first elected in 2018 and was reelected in November.

Manuel has also alleged that San Nicolas had a sexual relationship with Jennifer Winn, a subordinate who serves as the congressman's acting chief of staff.

"He just operates like he can get away (with it) and so far he has gotten away with it," Manuel told CQ Roll Call in 2020 of San Nicolas' alleged relationship with Winn. "They've been very good at trying to cover their tracks."

San Nicolas is married to Kathryn Santos Ko. They have two children.

The House in 2018 prohibited members from engaging in sexual relationships with their staff members after a wave of sexual harassment scandals involving members of Congress. The rule follows that: "A Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner may not engage in a sexual relationship with any employee of the House who works under the supervision of the Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner, or who is an employee of a committee on which the Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner serves." Married couples are exempt.

The Ethics Committee is not mandated to release the full Office of Congressional Ethics report until the end of the current 117th Congress.

Tom Rust, a spokesperson for the House Ethics Committee, did not comment. William Beaman, a spokesman for the Office of Congressional Ethics, did not comment.

Representatives for San Nicolas did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

FSM's newest telecom starts in Yap

Yap is poised to be the first state in the Federated States of Micronesia to benefit from the entry of its newest licensed telecom company, iBoom (www.iboom.io), which is led by Yap native Lubuw Falanruw, who is making sure this happens as quickly as possible.

A company statement yesterday said that iBoom is hoping to start operations soon after installing temporary fiber optic cables, which are due to arrive soon in Yap.

The development in Yap is part of the national government's Digital FSM Project, a World Bank-funded project that aims to connect all four states (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae) to undersea fiber optic cables, bringing fast, reliable internet and telecommunication to the people of FSM.

After the temporary cables are installed by iBoom to Colonia in Yap, work will start to build a permanent, resilient fiber-to-the-home network. The task of connecting each home, office and school to fiber optics is being implemented by FSM Telecommunications Cable Corp., which is FSM's Open Access Entity and own the network on behalf of FSM's government. They are spending an estimated $2 million on the Yap project alone, creating many local jobs during the installation and afterwards. An Australasian company, Universal Communications Group, won the contract to design the fiber-to-the-home network across three of FSM's states, including Yap.

The overall goal, the statement said, is to upgrade communications and digital infrastructure across FSM, setting up Yap for greatly improved economic development over the next decade.

Falanruw recognizes how vital this project would be to the growth of his home island. Despite delays to his plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors, he assembled a team of local and expatriate Yapese to get things jumpstarted, from sourcing materials and labor to state of the art equipment. "It's been challenging…but I am so grateful to have a team who all share the same passion and mission that iBoom has for Yap and its people," said Falanruw. "The…team has truly accomplished many miracles. They are the heroes."

Falanruw said that iBoom's initial objective is to simply level the playing field for residents and set higher standards of telecommunication services. "But our mission and vision are much broader, as we will be creating an environment that will bring in more jobs with career paths, foster local innovations and entrepreneurs, and bring in revenue from outside FSM. We are ready to take on the challenge of being the change agents, maintaining our integrity while balancing modern technology with our traditions," he added.

Both the Yap State Gov. Henry Falan and the Yap Legislature are 100% behind this project.

As a fully funded grant by the World Bank, the Digital FSM Project will not burden the government with additional loans or expenses. ***(PR)***

ARC
AQUA RESORT CLUB
Saipan
COSTA'S BUFFET IS BACK!
at Aqua Resort Club Saipan
SEAFOOD NIGHT BUFFET
Our Seafood Night Dinner Buffet is back! Indulge in all-you-can-eat Seafood appetizers, entrees, side dishes and delicious desserts, All complimented with bottomless beer!
FRIDAY • 6pm-9pm
Adults $38 | Children $19
STEAK NIGHT BUFFET
Our delicious Steak Night Dinner Buffet is back! All-you-can-eat Steak, fresh salad bar, side dishes, and desserts. Free-Flowing Red & White Wine and Bottomless beer & sodas!
SATURDAY • 6pm-9pm
Adults $38 | Children $19
SUNDAY BRUNCH BUFFET
Treat your family & friends to Champagne Sunday Brunch featuring a delectable buffet of international cuisines, free-flowing sparkling wine & a beautiful, bright beachfront view!
SUNDAY • 11am-2pm
Adults $38 | Children $19
Costa
Terrace Restaurant
Limited Seating Available, Reservations Recommended. Call (670) 322-1234 for Reservations & More Information
COSTA IS OPEN FOR LUNCH! • A La Carte Dining • Friday, Saturday & Monday • 11am-2pm

'Travel bubble between S. Korea and Saipan is ideal'

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Talks of a travel bubble—opening Saipan to tourists from South Korea in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic—have been on the table since late last year but that is still up in the air because the Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport has yet to respond to the CNMI's request for a meeting.

Long-time businessman and P&A Corp. chair Hong Kyun Kim believes, though, that a travel bubble agreement between South Korea and Saipan can serve as a model for other countries that are trying to find ways to slowly open up and ignite the tourism industry that was put on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Hong

"The travel bubble concept is ideal between South Korea and Saipan. …Japan and China will take a long time, that's why the focus is on South Korea. …The CNMI is the best place to welcome back tourists from Korea because of its good history of handling and implementing COVID-19 protocols that effectively screens arriving passengers and limit community transmission… and for their part, South Korea started to distribute the vaccine [in the] last week of February," he said.

Kim, who owns several businesses in the CNMI, supports the idea of travel bubble, saying that, as president of the Saipan Korea Cultural Center and representing Korean businesses on island, he is working on this independently to help fast-track the coordination between the CNMI and South Korea governments, with a target date of July this year.

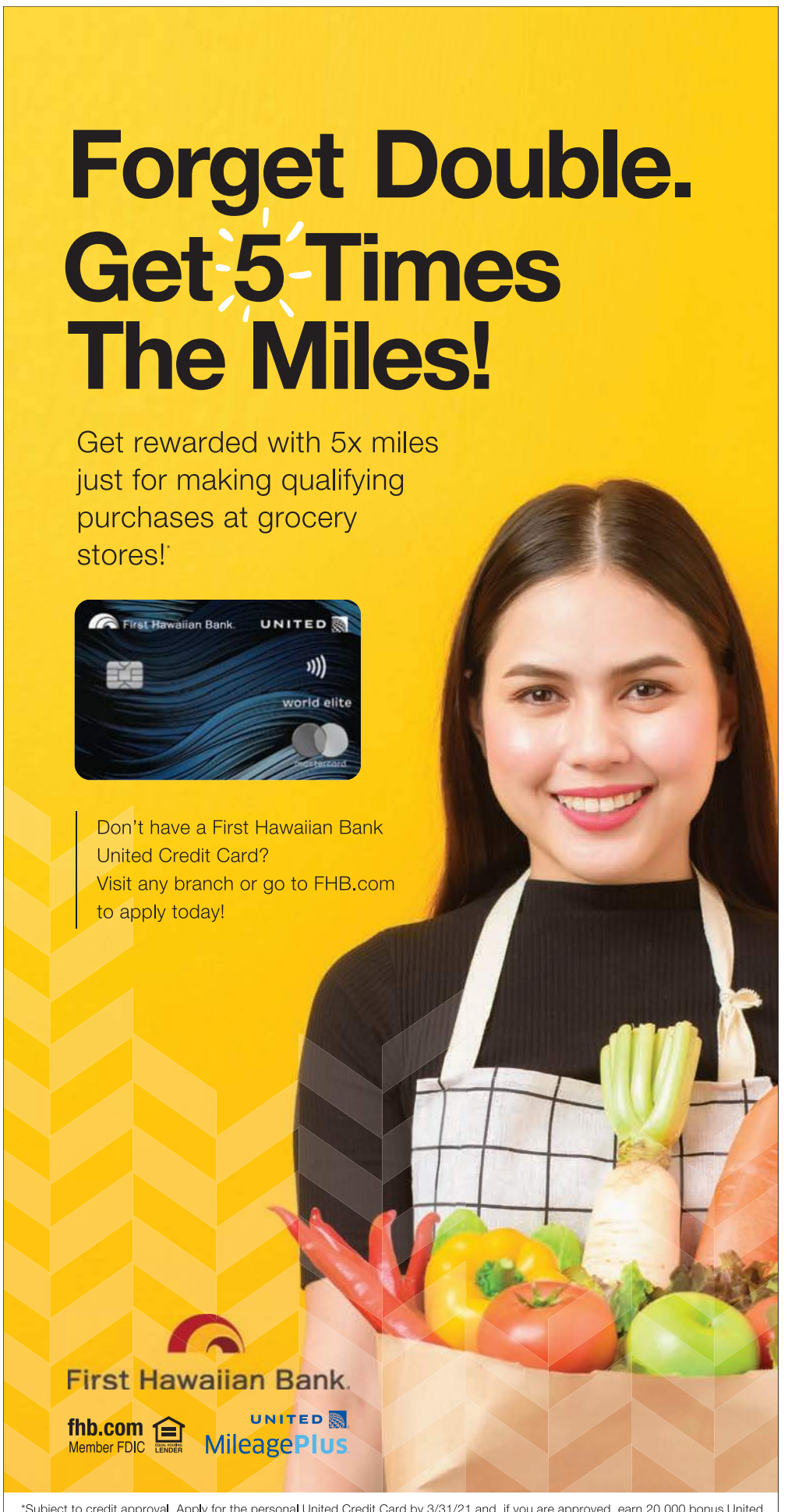
He pointed out that the CNMI's record in handling the pandemic "is like no other." When news of a COVID-19 outbreak came out in January 2020, the CNMI government and health leaders took it seriously early on. By March, the CNMI was under a state of significant emergency and state of public emergency, mass testing was done in April led by the COVID-19 Task Force. In December, the CNMI started to receive vaccines, and by January, vaccination to priority groups started ramping up.

"Saipan is attractive to Korean tourists. Aside from it being close, just a three-hour flight away, other factors are noteworthy. First, no COVID-19 case was reported from Korea from the time of the outbreak and when flights were stopped. Even when charter flights went back-and-forth to carry Korean nationals back to Korea, there were zero reports of positive cases and transmission. Of all the positive cases that surfaced after quarantine on Saipan, no Korean national was involved. Second, the CNMI has vaccinated over 10,000 residents already, which makes 10% of the population. Third, CNMI officials are hoping to achieve more than 90% vaccination of the population," he said. "With the current vaccination registration and procedure, we will be able to reach 80% and achieve herd immunity by April."

Kim assured that Koreans are ready to travel and have been reserving trips not only to the CNMI but to other parts of the world, "which means they are ready to travel and it would be good for the economy if we capture that market," Kim added

Kim said that he will meet with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres at the end of this month to talk about plans of a possible trip to Korea and talk to public officials there.

Who is being vaccinated?
How do I sign up?
Vaccination is OPEN for individuals 50 years+ OR People working in:
Grocery stores, restaurants (including catering) bakeries, wholesalers, commercial farming and fishing
Gas stations , electric or other energy and utilities companies
Taxi, other transportation, and delivery
Construction, maintenance, or rehabilitation of critical infrastructure
Hotel/lodging, maintaining business plazas, recreational facilities, or public events including sports federations
Barbers, salons, and massage therapy
Banks or insurance companies
Trash collection and other waste services
Schools, daycares, and colleges
Media & Telecommunications
CNMI (State/Local) Government Employees (All agencies)
COVID-19 Contractors employed by the CNMI Governor's Task Force
Faith-based groups
Healthcare
REGISTER ONLINE at vaccinatecnmi.com
Over the PHONE by calling 682-SHOT (7468)
Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine is available for Saipan residents 65 years+
ONE SHOT & DONE!
We have 400 doses available
CALL 682-7468 TO RESERVE
VACCINATE CNMI CALL CENTER: Mon-Sat 8am-8pm & Sunday 8am-1:30pm
VACCINATE CNMI WEBSITE: vaccinatecnmi.com
@cnmichcc


Forget Double.
Get 5 Times The Miles!
Get rewarded with 5x miles just for making qualifying purchases at grocery stores!*
First Hawaiian Bank
UNITED
world elite
Don't have a First Hawaiian Bank United Credit Card?
Visit any branch or go to FHB.com to apply today!
First Hawaiian Bank.
fhb.com
Member FDIC
UNITED MileagePlus
*Subject to credit approval. Apply for the personal United Credit Card by 3/31/21 and, if you are approved, earn 20,000 bonus United Miles with $1,500 spend within the first 6 months after account opening AND 5x United MileagePlus Miles per $1 spent on purchases at grocery stores for the first $10,000 spent or until 12/31/21, whichever occurs first. Thereafter, 2x United MileagePlus Miles per $1 spent on purchases at grocery stores. Your account opening date is noted on the upper right corner of your new account letter. You'll continue to earn 2x United MileagePlus Miles per $1 spent on gas, dining (Private Banking Only) and United Airlines tickets purchased through United ticketing channels, and 1x United MileagePlus Mile per $1 spent on all other purchases. United MileagePlus Miles have no cash value except as described in the United Program Agreement. Travel and booking subject to availability. Additional fees and restrictions apply. See the United Program Agreement for more information. First Hawaiian Bank reserves the right to cancel or change the Program at any time without prior notice. Purchases made at department stores, superstores, discount stores, and warehouse clubs are not eligible to receive Earned Reward Miles.

LAWMAKERS AGREE ON URGENCY ON BILL RESTORING EITC

Representatives vote to place EITC bill on calendar for action

The House of Representatives voted yesterday to withdraw from the Committee on Ways and Means and place on calendar for action at their next session a bill that Rep. Christina Marie E. Sablan (D-Saipan) introduced that would repeal a law in order to make working families eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

At the session, Sablan said the American Rescue Plan Act that President Joseph Biden Jr. just signed last Friday fully and permanently fund the EITC for the CNMI and other territories. Sablan said the Department of Finance estimates the value of that EITC at approximately $25 million based on 2019 data. She said the next step for the Legislature is to repeal a local CNMI law that imposes a 100% tax on income tax credit for working families.

"I'd like to urge for your support…to make sure that we remove that barrier for our people to receive the EITC and to make sure that these funds are delivered as quickly as possible," she said.

Sablan said this is money that will go right back into the local economy—like its own kind of stimulus.

Cosponsored by several other lawmakers, Sablan's H.B. 22-19 would restore the EITC for low-and moderate-income families in the CNMI.

The EITC is a refundable tax credit in the U.S. Internal Revenue Service Code that helps qualified low- to moderate-income working families and taxpayers get a tax break by allowing them to use the credit to reduce the taxes they owe, and in some cases, increase their tax refunds.

The legislation will repeal Title 4 Section 1709 of the Commonwealth Code, which currently provides that a taxpayer who is owed a tax refund due to "any excessive credit" must pay an additional tax to the Commonwealth that is equal to 100% of the refund.

Sablan said since the enactment of Public Law 11-25 in 1998, low-and middle-income earners of the CNMI have been burdened by this 100% tax on refunds for which they would have otherwise qualified.

Floor leader Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-Saipan) moved to withdraw Sablan's House Bill 22-19 from the Committee on Ways and Means and place it on the calendar.

Sablan pointed out that, as soon as the American Rescue Plan Act was enacted into law, over half a billion dollars became available for EITC and of that amount, $25 million is available to fully and permanently fund EITC here in the Marianas.

"And for us to make these funds available to our people to qualify struggling working taxpayers and families, we have to repeal the section of the law that slaps a 100% tax on the EITC," she said. Otherwise, those funds will not get to the people, she added.

Now that the funding is available, the money should be transferred to the CNMI government in short order, she said.

Sablan said there will be time for all lawmakers to review the American Rescue Plan Act, particularly as it pertains to the EITC. "It's very straightforward. It's 100% permanent funding for the EITC. But we have to do our part…and restore the EITC in our own law before these funds can be available. So that is the urgency," she said.

The American Rescue Plan Act is a $1.9-trillion stimulus package for the American people, and all U.S. territories, including the Marianas.

Sablan said she would be more than happy to share with lawmakers excerpts of the Act that makes it very clear that this is 100% and it's permanent. "I will share that with you. I just got it myself a few days ago,"

Committee on Ways and Means chair Rep. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota) said that, based on the information that Sablan has shared, it's the understanding of his committee that they do have the necessary information to act on this legislation. "Again, time is of the essence," Manglona said. "And we're just trying to get the money out to the people in need."

Manglona said Sablan did share that she will disseminate that information to the rest of the House members who have not seen that yet.

The House members then unanimously voted to withdraw the bill from the committee and place it on the calendar for action at the next session. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

ERRATUM

In the story titled "Stabbing suspect released to three third-party custodians" that was published yesterday, March 16, 2021, it was clarified that the suspect in the case merely lives in a barracks near the Tropex Garden in Fina Sisu.

COVID-19

From Page 1

For the next 25 days beginning this Thursday, March 18, the joint Philippine Consulate General-Guam and Philippine Honorary Consulate-CNMI consular services will continue through April 11, 2021.

"As we are all aware, our Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and all of our public health authorities have been working round-the-clock in ensuring that our small community remains safe for us to move around," said honorary Philippine consul to the CNMI Glicerio "Eli" Arago. "Let us not be complacent. We can do our part and abide by the guidelines and protocols that have been put place to help protect everyone."

Processes

Consular services at the Sun Palace Hotel-Saipan will begin on time at 8:30am and end at 4:30pm daily from March 18 to April 11.

Consular services will be provided on all weekends during the period covered.

Assistance and services will be provided strictly based on a per-appointment and per-schedule basis only. Those with appointments must show up 15 minutes prior to their individual scheduled time.

Those that have yet to make appointment are encouraged to call the Philippine Honorary Consulate-Support Office at (670) 233-6293.

Everyone must wear a mask.

Everyone must sign up/register right before entry. A sanitation station by the entrance to the support office had been set up.

A temperature check is required of everyone before they are entertained for their scheduled appointment.

Six-foot social distancing is enforced.

Arago is also appealing to everyone's understanding that "no chaperones" are allowed except and/or unless those that are seeking consular services are minors/children and elderly.

Crowding or standing by are not allowed within and or by the Philippine Honorary Consulate CNMI-Support Office site for everyone's safety and wellbeing.

As of today, more than 2,500 Filipino nationals have already signed up for various consular services needs. The joint Philippine consular mission will process and handle 100 individual consular needs daily during the period covered.

The Philippine Consulate General-Guam's diplomatic representatives to this joint mission are Consul Alex O. Vallespin, team leader; Jermyn Julius R. Checa, consular assistant/passport officer; Fritz Gerald A. Fernandez, consular assistant for passport; Ferdinand E. Villamor, consular assistant for other consular services; and Ellen P. Morco, collecting officer.

Arago is leading the local Saipan team. He is joined by his key team members: Annamae Adaza, welfare officer and community affairs; Ariel Mariano, legal affairs; Mario Mayuga, operations and community outreach, and Ulysses Torres-Sabuco, government and public affairs. ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Board of Trustees Special Meeting
at NMTI, Lower Base
Saturday, March 20, 2021 – 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

I. Meeting Called to Order
II. Adoption of Agenda
III. Public Comments
IV. Executive Session
V. New Business
  1. Chairman's Report
  2. 2022 Budget Appropriation
VI. Unfinished Business
  1. Transition Transfer
    a. Appointment of Interim CEO
    b. OPA Audit
    c. Technical Institute Banking accounts
    d. Set up of Trust Fund
    e. Da'ok Academy facility use and contract
    f. Employees and contracts
    g. EDA NMTI Facility Award

NOTE: *Copies of this notice and agenda have been posted at the Administration Building Entrance Hall, the House of Representatives Entrance Hall and the Senate Entrance Hall. Written comments on the agenda may be submitted to the Northern Marianas Technical Institute through the Office of the Governor (Attn: NMTI) or emailed to: cnmitechnicalinstitute@gmail.com on or before the meeting date. Oral testimony may be presented during the meeting on TBD.*

10K

From Page 1

This time around, DOL won't be accepting late applications. Benavente said that the PUA program guidelines "must be adhered to."

"DOL must continue to follow the rules, otherwise we are jeopardizing the program for…those applicants who submitted their applications on time," said Benavente.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Benavente said that they asked for $185 million for this second round of the PUA/PFUC programs, compared to the $249 million they asked for in the first round.

Last Feb. 17, 2021, DOL was notified of the grant award from the U.S. Department of Labor, amounting to $184,800,000. Of this amount, $92,400,000 is for PUA benefits and $92,400,000 is for FPUC benefits.

The department was also granted $210,000 to incorporate additional funding for Identity Verification of PUA claimants and to assist with efforts to prevent and detect fraud, identity theft, and recover fraud overpayments in the PUA program.

FBI

From Page 1

In a brief interview with Rufo Mafnas, who co-owns RR & Associates, he said the boxes involved confidential client tax information but was not able to comment further.

Saipan Tribune tried to obtain comments from FBI Honolulu spokesperson Michelle Ernest to obtain more details about the matter but she had not responded as of press time.

Mafnas said their account and tax services deal with confidential matters that involve client taxes, so they wouldn't be able to disclose anything.

Mafnas confirmed he was there while the FBI agents were collecting boxes of confidential records of a client's information.

Observers in the area told *Saipan Tribune* that the FBI agents arrived at 10am yesterday and left sometime around 1pm, adding that they only learned snippets of what was going on after the FBI agents left.

A photo that circulated on social media platforms showed FBI agents carrying boxes and transferring them to a silver Ford F-150 truck. Both bystanders and Mafnas said there were four FBI agents who came to collect what they needed.

There were speculations that Department of Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente visited the facility last March 15 before the FBI came, but it was not confirmed. *Saipan Tribune* reached out to Benavente about this matter, but as of press time, she has not responded.

At first there were speculations that the FBI agents were taking boxes from a nearby law firm. However, *Saipan Tribune* checked and clerks of the law office confirmed that the FBI agents visited RR & Associates.

CHCC

From Page 1

In a phone interview with Governor's COVID-19 Task Force chair Warren Villagomez, he said this modified quarantine will also require the task force to first inspect the returning resident's home. He said this will help them decide whether a returning resident can "safely home quarantine."

Villagomez clarified that the returning resident who is eligible for home quarantine is someone who is from the CNMI, got fully vaccinated in the CNMI but went off-island and then came back. Additionally, those returning residents who are coming back must register at the governor.gov.mp website 72 hours before their arrival, according to CHCC. That website contains the health declaration form that returning residents must fill up.

Villagomez said the individual will be swabbed on arrival and will be waiting for their results with other returning residents who are also eligible for the modified quarantine. This will be the same for the fifth day testing.

The task force, CHCC, and the contact tracers will be monitoring those who are eligible for the modified quarantine. Villagomez said there are no talks for individuals coming in who were fully vaccinated elsewhere to be eligible for home quarantine. This means that those who are fully vaccinated from the U.S. or Guam and are coming into the CNMI are not eligible to home quarantine.

The home quarantine is just another option. If returning residents prefer to quarantine at government sites, they can still do so.

As for the COVID-19 test through the community surveillance at the Kanoa Resort in Susupe, Villagomez said they all came back negative.

CHCC announced that the surveillance testing has been closed from today to March 19. However, Villagomez said that a SolGent Co. Ltd scientist will be arriving from Korea this Friday and community-based testing will continue next week.

CUC: We've been operating below revenue since last year

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has been operating at a 34% below revenue since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the corporation was able to ensure that all its employees stayed at 80 hours, says CUC executive director Gary Camacho.

In a recent appearance before the House Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications Committee meeting, Camacho said that CUC has been operating at times 34% below revenue since last year. He declined to state a dollar figure. The CNMI went into lockdown in mid-March last year.

Despite this challenge, CUC was able to ensure that all its staff are making 80 hours up to this day, Camacho said, thanks to several cost-cutting measures. He said he also notified his staff early in 2020 that there would be multiple challenges the corporation would face in the ensuing months.

"We've made some adjustments. We've made some sacrifices over the last year, but it was a unified effort. We had a number of meetings with staff and made it clear to them early in 2020 what we were up against and knew the challenges were going to multiply until the economy is back," said Camacho.

He said if they weren't able to ensure that CUC had the workforce required to perform repairs, to safely operate and maintain the power, water, and wastewater infrastructure on all three islands, then this would have caused them to defer many projects and jeopardize federal funding.

"As everyone is aware, CUC operates a number of power plants. You can't take 10%, 20% of the staff out of a power plant without raising risk and putting those people in danger. …This is the same with linemen and water and wastewater personnel," said Camacho.

In separate interview, Camacho clarified that the risk factors is that if a project needs five employees to operate safely and you take away two, the remaining three would be at risk for injuries. Cost-cutting, Camacho said, was the only way to ensure that the CUC staff would remain at 80 hours and projects wouldn't be deferred.

"We were already very limited and our personnel and that's why our efforts were trying to ensure that we had 80 hours for the limited people that we had on board and we were able to do that," said Camacho. "For the most part, I think we've been doing well considering we've been operating below revenue."

VOX POPULI

Universal garbage collection: Yes or no?

By NEIL FAMA
neil_fama@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

"The idea is great… but that may cause a rift with garbage disposal companies like Artman and AYD (could be others). In addition, it may also add more burden to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. because they would have to get more people to help them out. But personally, as someone who already has a high CUC bill, I'm not really a fan of my bill going up."

—Christian Castillo, Finasisu

"I think [it] is a wonderful idea. It would allow us as a Commonwealth to be more responsible and proactive in managing our waste, not to mention the new job opportunities this can create. My only concern is whether our government and economy will be able to maintain this system and whether we can modify and update the system as time goes on."

—Jason Sanchez, Afetna

"I don't it's a good idea. I think [existing] laws should be enforced [instead]. If they were to implement this, would it be free? How about those who [already] pay [for garbage collection services]? They might find it too much of a hassle to pay for trash services and just do this. There wouldn't be enough money flow. What's the use of those no-litter signs with the $500 fine? If anything, this will only allow those that illegally dump their trash to get away with illegal dumping even more."

—Annie Arriola, Gualo Rai

"I think universal garbage collection is a pretty great idea because it would make the island look more beautiful since trash won't be littered outside anymore. It is also beneficial to the environment and its surroundings; we won't see garbage lying or scattered around the side of the road."

—Daniella Marie Reginio, Chalan Lau Lau

"I think it's a really cool idea! I think dropping off trash will be a bit fun for people who find joy in stuff like that. But I don't know if people will like the added cost to their bill, although seeing the drop-off sites will probably encourage more people not to litter."

—Clarisse Torio, Garapan

"I [kind of] like it. My only concern is the price. Curbside pickup? How would it be scheduled? Do you call them when your trash is full? I would like to know more about how it will be conducted. A lot of people throw their trash [just anywhere] because they can't afford Artman, so this could be good.

—Lizelle Cruz, Susupe

"I think it's a good idea overall [but] just not in the CNMI. I feel that this would further push illegal dumping as money is tight in the world we live in today during the pandemic. What I think should happen is specific days for garbage disposal to be mandatory and patrols in areas where illegal dumping may take place be scanned often as well as charges being bumped up to discourage future dumping endeavors."

—Gren Cepeda, Koblerville

"Universal garbage is definitely a game-changer when it comes to collecting trash. But do we really need it? Sure, it eases the jobs of our men and makes collecting faster and easier, but how much impact can that change really make? That garbage collection is what we are doing today and every day, and using newer systems will lead to the same results—just collecting trash except easier, faster, and perhaps more organized. If we do implement this, I don't think it would impact the environment as much as we would expect it to, considering the charges. If we are going to focus on problems in relation to trash, maybe it's more efficient to put money into educating our people in reducing our waste, such as through recycling and segregating."

—Grace Catalma, As Teo

"I'm very hesitant in supporting this based on the lack of information, how much the rate would be, and how it will be processed. Will weight be a factor? Will CUC be taking all the money? What does this mean for our other garbage collection companies on island?"

—Clarrianne Manebo, Gualo Rai

"Saipan is so beautiful and it's painful to see it neglected, particularly with solid waste not properly managed, with people just throwing garbage anywhere. Perhaps, this universal garbage collection is the answer as it will make it a bit more convenient for people to just have their trash picked up straight from their homes. An additional fee that CUC would be collecting for it would be worth it if it would mean keeping the island clean not just today but for the generations to come."

—Iva Maurin, Capital Hill

DCRM
SUMMER
INTERNSHIP
COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
The Division of Coastal Resources Management is looking for 15 CNMI-based college students or college-bound high school graduates with an interest in learning more about coral reef and coastal zone management. Our summer interns work 20 hours a week for 10 weeks from June to August and are paid $10.00 per hour.
To be considered, please submit the following documents by email to outreach@dcrm.gov.mp
CNMI EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION
Which can be found at www.cnmiopm.net
COVER LETTER
RESUME/CV
TRANSCRIPTS
Official or Unofficial
TWO (2) LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION
Instructors and/or Employers Only
POLICE CLEARANCE
Within the Last 3 Months
COPY OF VALID PHOTO ID
Driver's License, Passport, etc.
APPLY BY FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2021
This summer's internship opportunities include:
MARINE MONITORING ◦ EDUCATION & OUTREACH
SHORELINE MONITORING ◦ SPECIAL AREA MANAGEMENT ◦ REGULATORY COMPLIANCE
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ◦ WATERSHED MANAGEMENT
For more information, contact DCRM at
664-8300 or visit our website at WWW.DCRM.GOV.MP
NOAA
NOAA CORAL REEF

Haligi Aware brings mental health wellness message to Rota

Sinapalo Elementary School and Rota Head Start teachers and staff pose for a picture with Project Haligi Aware trainers during a mental health professional development training on Rota last Monday, March 8, 2021. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Public School System's Mental Health Program, called Project Haligi Aware, brought its message of mental health awareness to Rota last Monday, March 8, 2021, in a professional development training for Sinapalo Elementary School and Rota Head Start's teachers and staff.

The training, called titled "Mental Health Matters," was intended to highlight the importance of mental health. Haligi Aware continues to promote mental health advocacy and efficient self-care strategies, coping skills, and stress management through a variety of services, including the professional growth of educators.

"We appreciate the team making time to come out to Rota and having this mental health workshop offered to us," said Sinapalo Elementary School principal Daisy Quitugua. "This brought the teachers and staff back to feeling like a complete person again. Knowing that we are two weeks away from the first anniversary of COVID-19 is even more important to learn these strategies and make things feel a little easier. Taking a mindful minute and practicing mindful exercises can help us re-align and be one with ourselves again."

Haligi Aware staff also met with Board of Education vice chair Herman Atalig, who represents Rota on the BOE. "With all the things happening in the world, we need to focus on our students' mental health," said Atalig. "Another concern is to make sure our teachers and staff are in good mental health to provide care to our students and support their emotional needs. Project Haligi Aware will mean a lot to our kids and do a lot for our community. They are our front-liners and crisis action response team for mental health."

Haligi Aware also had the opportunity to meet with Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig, who said, "I am so happy that these types of services are offered to the people of the CNMI. The pandemic and typhoons are stressful for us. It is good that we are recognizing the need and offering these services to our community. We need to encourage our kids to take advantage of the services offered because they are our future. We need to show our kids that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. By simply starting the conversation, we can make our kids feel like they are supported and that we are here to help."

Haligi Aware prepares PSS teachers and administrative staff to recognize and respond to behavioral health and mental health issues among students. The program's ultimate goal is to be able to give students immediate on-site response and referral.

Haligi Aware is designed to support all students throughout the CNMI and help those who experience hopelessness and depression and work toward resilience/strength. "We want to work with our school teachers, counselors, and staff because everyone has experienced some sort of trauma in their lives," said program director Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan. "If we don't provide the support our teachers and staff require, how do we expect them to be the supportive individual our students need? Our people have built a legacy of strength and we want to continue that. Being strong does not mean that we do not feel stressed or that we do not feel anxious; we are strong because we know how to reach out and ask for help."

Haligi Aware will implement behavioral health methods that help give access to reliable services within the school and community. Dr. Jennifer Maratita, licensed mental health specialist, said, "There has been an increase in mental health referral services. Students are showing higher rates of depression and suicide ideation. Haligi Aware helps us give the community resources and our students the ability to receive specialized treatment in a safe environment. Research shows that our students are likely to be more successful in getting the treatment they need for depression in the school setting."

Program co-director Dr. Bobby Cruz said the conversation about mental health should be changed in order to create thriving and healthy communities, tearing down the stigma that prevents people from getting the necessary help that they need. "We want people to say that they need help and know who to go to for support. This is particularly important as we strive to ensure that our students achieve academic success and overall emotional wellness," he said.

Haligi Aware supports the PSS goal of providing a safe and caring learning environment that supports all students' behavioral health and academic achievement. "Haligi" is the Chamorro term for the pillar of the latte stone, and like the *haligi*, we are here to support you.

In the months to follow, Haligi Aware will continue to provide a multi-tiered system of support for the optimal mental wellness of PSS students, teachers and community.

If you or someone that you care for needs immediate support, call:

- PSS Student and Support Services at 664-3822. Office hours are from 7:30am - 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.
- Systems of Care at 664-4604. Office hours are from 7:30am - 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1(800) 273-8255 which provides counseling and support 24 hours a day.
- If it is an emergency, call 911 or go to the CHCC Emergency Room. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

Eli D. Cabrera, Administrator
Janice E. Castro, Director, DCRM

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

ROUTE 35 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
(CHALAN TUN HERMAN PAN-AIRPORT ROAD)
COASTAL PERMIT NO. SMS-2000-X-142-A1

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing for the proposed road improvements of the Route 35 also known as the Chalan Tun Herman Pan Road.

The Department of Public Works is proposing to improve the Route 35 (Tun Herman Pan) Road which includes hazard elimination such as inclusion of guardrail, traffic signs and drainage improvements and pavement rehabilitation. Route 35 is a two-lane undivided roadway along the 0.78-mile length beginning from the Route 31 (Chalan Msgr. Guerrero) Road intersection and ending at the intersection of Route 304 (Flame Road).

The public hearing for this project is scheduled to take place on **Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at 5:00 PM at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center** in Susupe, Saipan. COVID-19 protocols will be implemented and all participants are required to wear a face mask at all times.

Written comments can be submitted by mail to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, sent by fax to 664-8315, or emailed to permitting@dcrm.gov.mp. The project files are open and can be reviewed by scheduling an appointment with DCRM. All written and oral comments received by DCRM will be included as part of the permit application records and will be considered in any decisions concerning the proposed projects. Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Route 35 Road Improvement project.

/s/ JANICE E. CASTRO
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
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Eli D. Cabrera, Administrator
Janice E. Castro, Director, DCRM

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

ROUTE 36 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
(WINDWARD-CHALAN KALABERA)
COASTAL PERMIT NO. SMS-2021-015

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing for the proposed road improvements of the Route 36 along the north-east coastline of Saipan.

The Department of Public Works, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHA) is proposing to construct road improvements along Route 36 Windward-Chalan Kalabera Road on the northeastern coast of Saipan. The proposed project would widen, grade, and pave approximately 3.64 miles of existing road and to replace two drainage crossings at Unai Fanhang and Unai Nanasu by creating a continuous roadway connecting the Talofofo sector with the Marpi sector of Route 36.

The public hearing for this project is scheduled to take place on **Wednesday, April 7, 2021, at 5:00 PM, at the BECQ 2nd Floor Main Conference Room** on Middle Road in Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan. Due to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and to ensure the health and safety of all, virtual public participation is highly encouraged via video conferencing through Google Meet (https://meet.google.com/gsm-zurs-kca) or join via telephone by calling the DCRM Office at (670) 664-8300 for connection assistance. Google Meet access code may change. Please call DCRM for an update.

Written comments can be submitted by mail to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, sent by fax to 664-8315, or emailed to permitting@dcrm.gov.mp. The project files are open and can be reviewed by scheduling an appointment with DCRM. All written and oral comments received by DCRM will be included as part of the permit application records and will be considered in any decisions concerning the proposed projects. Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Route 36 Road Improvement project.

/s/ JANICE E. CASTRO
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP21-CHCC/AOC-COVID-19-001
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 20, 2021 TIME:10:00AM (CHST)

"CHCC VACCINATION CALL CENTER"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.GOV.MP]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORAZON P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP21-CHCC/AOC-COVID-19-002
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 22, 2021 TIME:10:00AM (CHST)

"CHCC COVID-19 VACCINATION COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.GOV.MP]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & S UPPLY

'Haaland confirmation important for US territories

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Equally American issued the following statement yesterday in response to the U.S. Senate confirming Deb Haaland to serve as Interior secretary in the Biden-Harris Administration. The Department of the Interior is responsible for coordinating federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands through its Office of Insular Affairs.

"The confirmation of America's first Native American Cabinet secretary is an important historic milestone for the United States," said Neil Weare, president and founder of Equally American, a nonpartisan public interest organization that works to advance equality and voting rights in U.S. territories.

Haaland

"Secretary Haaland's lived experience will bring a long overdue perspective and leadership to the Department of the Interior. And that is especially important for the more than 370,000 Americans living in the territories she will directly serve, the overwhelming majority of whom are racial minorities or indigenous peoples."

"Secretary Haaland will lead the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to help citizens in the territories recover from the economic and public health challenges wrought by the pandemic, and to build back better," Weare added.

In a letter to Haaland yesterday, Equally American encouraged her to take action to fight for voting rights in U.S. territories, reject the *Insular Cases*, and end discrimination against territorial residents in federal programs like Supplemental Security Income program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Medicaid. The letter also encouraged the Biden-Harris Administration to name a nominee to lead the Office of Insular Affairs, which coordinates federal policy related to the territories and Freely Associated States.

"We hope Secretary Haaland will become a champion for the territories, fighting to ensure that every U.S. citizen has equal rights and representation wherever they live," Weare said. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp
Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2021

THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS PAID FOR BY NMHC WITH CPD FUNDS.

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, **through the** Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is announcing the availability of an **estimated** $1,323,784.00 in Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. NMHC anticipates receiving an estimated amount of $867,556.00 in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); $386,617.00 in Home Investment Partnerships (HOME); and $69,611.00 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds for Program Year (PY) 2021.

The CDBG funds, authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, may be used for a wide range of community development activities to revitalize neighborhoods, provide affordable housing, expand economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services. However, use of these funds must meet at least one of the national objectives which include: 1) to benefit low and moderate-income families; 2) to eliminate slum or blight conditions; or 3) to meet other urgent community development needs.

The CDBG program requires a grant recipient to certify that it will minimize displacement of persons as a result of activities assisted with CDBG funds. The CNMI government does not plan on undertaking any activity which will cause displacement of person. In the event of any unforeseen displacement resulting from any CDBG funded activity, the CNMI government will comply with the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, its implementing regulation and applicable local law.

HOME funds may be used to create affordable housing through financing assistance, site acquisition or improvement, and rehabilitating existing residential dwellings as well as providing funds for new construction or purchase of a single-family residential dwelling. Use of HOME funds must benefit low-income families.

ESG funds may be used to rehabilitate or convert to buildings into homeless shelters and for shelter operating expenses, supportive services and homeless prevention **and rapid re-housing** activities. Use of ESG funds must benefit the homeless.

You may access the CPD applications on the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by selecting the "Public Notice/Announcement" menu tab, beginning February 02, 2021.

Applications must be submitted to the NMHC Offices in Garapan, Saipan (Saipan Applicants); NMC Campus, Building A (Tinian Applicants); and Songsong Village, Rota (Rota Applicants) by ***April 30, 2021, no later than 4:30 p.m. Applications submitted after April 30 2021, will not be accepted.***

Additional inquiries, concerning the CPD program, may be directed to Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director or Ms. Tricia Tenorio, Planner at 234-6866 or 234-9447.

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-020

Installation of Sludge Dewatering Equipment

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Installation of Sludge Dewatering Equipment in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The intent of the contract is for the Contractor to provide all labor, equipment, supplies and materials necessary to complete the scope of work which consists of; installation of sludge dewatering equipment including the screw press skid (OFCI) for full function. The work shall include; selective demolition of existing improvements, the installation of sludge dewatering units (OFCI), shaftless auger conveyor (OFCI), installation of pressure pumps, installation of water storage tanks, and rehabilitation and modification of existing improvements, along with other miscellaneous features, for one unit at Sadog Tasi Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and one unit at Agingan WWTP. The work shall be completed with minimal disruption to the daily operation of the Sadog Tasi WWTP and Agingan WWTP. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 180 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, oeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **$100.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **March 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM** (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-21-020, Installation of Sludge Dewatering Equipment" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 29, 2021, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the Unites States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A *Payment Bond* of one Hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on March 16, 2021 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Westen Knudsen, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email address westen.knudsen@cucgov.org and to Marcela Tenorio, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician - marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Janice E. Castro
Director, DCRM

PUBLIC NOTICE
MEETING OF THE CRM AGENCY OFFICIALS

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios through the Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) hereby give notice that a CRM Agency Officials meeting will be held on Thursday, April 8, 2021, 9:00AM at the BECQ 2nd Floor Conference Room, in Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan.

Due to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and to ensure the health and safety of all, virtual public participation is highly encouraged via video conferencing through Google Meet (https://meet.google.com/jtr-rntv-sgu) or join via telephone by calling the DCRM office at (670) 664-8300 for

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
   A. Call to Order
   B. Roll Call
   C. Adoption of Agenda
   D. Adoption of March 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

II. PERMIT APPLICATION REVIEW

1) CRM Permit Application No. SMS-2000-X-142-A1
Project: ROUTE 35 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Applicant: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
The Department of Public Works is proposing to improve 0.78 mile length of Route 35 (Tun Herman Pan) Road which includes hazard elimination such as inclusion of guardrails, traffic signs, drainage improvements, and pavement rehabilitation.
a. Agencies' Discussion
b. Agencies' Final Determination

2) CRM Permit Application No. SMS-2021-015#
Project: ROUTE 36 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Applicant: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
The Department of Public Works is proposing to construct road improvements along Route 36 Windward-Chalan Kalabera Road on the northeastern coast of Saipan. The proposed project will improve about 3.64 miles of the road as well as to replace two major drainage crossings, creating a continuous roadway connection with the Talofofo sector and the Marpi sector of Route 36.
a. Agencies' Discussion
b. Agencies' Final Determination

III. OTHER MATTERS
IV. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony regarding the above agenda items. (NOTE: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a) (7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session).

/s/ JANICE E. CASTRO
Director, DCRM

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Could you pass a citizenship test? Most Americans can't

If you were born in this country, there is a high probability that you know less about the Constitution and American history than do immigrants who become citizens. And various studies indicate that you might also flunk the citizenship exam.

Many of us can name the family members of the cartoon Simpsons, but struggle to name the three branches of government, according to the Annenberg Public Policy Center. And when it comes to First Amendment freedoms, many of us are doing well to remember one of the five—speech, religion, press, assembly and petition of the government—and not invent a couple that fit our worldview.

A nation is bound together by a common understanding of citizenship and civic responsibility. This is why we are excited that Educating for American Democracy—the brainchild of the Education Department and the National Endowment for the Humanities—is proposing a new road map for teaching social studies, history and civics.

The project's goal is to thoughtfully invest in teacher training and curriculum to inspire K-12 students to be constructively involved in their communities, embrace compromise, promote civic honesty and patriotism as guiding principles, and teach history and civics through timelines and themes of our history.

The moment is right for this investment in ourselves. Distrust of government runs dangerously high, conspiracy theories proliferate social media, alternate facts are considered facts and disagreements become an excuse for violent resolutions.

Enough of us don't understand or appreciate the importance of checks and balances, separation of powers, federalism, equal protection, due process and the protection of minority rights. In many ways, the attack on the U.S. Capitol highlighted the stunning disconnect between core constitutional principles and those who have their own twisted understanding of what democracy and patriotism mean.

America has thought and implemented big ideas before. In the 1950s, the Cold War-era space race led to improved science education, technological breakthroughs and an American on the moon in 1969. And nearly 40 years ago, a landmark report called "A Nation at Risk" argued that "a high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society." That report spawned an overdue refocus on math, science, English, and foreign languages that unfortunately came at the expense of civics, history and social studies.

This worthy effort must not disintegrate into factious disputes as did the controversial Common Core State Standards Initiative, which attempted to set unified expectations for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in preparation for college and the workforce. For one, this civics initiative does not establish a national curriculum, or a set of instructional standards, a level of flexibility that hopefully will reduce friction and specious arguments about indoctrination and mandates that dogged Common Core.

Refocusing educational time on civics reinforces the importance of engaged citizens in our system of government. We can't protect our fragile freedoms if we are ill-equipped to honor our responsibilities to each other, our institutions and ourselves. A republic that has enough self-respect to teach itself civics is a republic that will long endure.

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CDC guidelines for vaccinated are too cautious, but they hint normalcy is coming soon

By CYNTHIA M. ALLEN
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Cynthia M. Allen is a columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Readers may send her email at cmallen@star-telegram.com.

Several weeks ago, when national surveys suggested that a sizable portion of the U.S. population had no intention of getting vaccinated against COVID-19, I wondered why public health officials were not incentivizing the shot.

Get your vaxx, get back to normal seemed like a catchy PSA.

Yet despite a bounty of research that suggests vaccinated people are far less likely to transmit the virus to others, (the job that masks and distancing have supposedly been doing for almost a year now), political and public health leaders continued for weeks to insist that masks, distancing and quarantines were necessary even for vaccinated people.

This suggested a striking lack of confidence in the vaccines' efficacy and an unsurprisingly tone-deaf message that "normalcy" as we once knew it will always be beyond our grasp.

That changed last week (kind of), when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new guidance for the fully vaccinated, saying they can now safely gather unmasked and without distancing themselves from certain people in very specific situations.

To be clear, the new guidance isn't really a reason to get excited, even if the research that motivated it is.

The guidance is incremental, sometimes confusing and, like so many elements of the public health response to the global pandemic, insufficient and long overdue.

But it does acknowledge that the vaccines prevent serious illness and death and even neutralize the virus variants that only weeks ago prompted health officials to warn that we may be on the cusp of a deadly fourth wave.

This is a big deal, and not just because it makes Dr. Anthony Fauci's comments that masks will probably be needed well into 2022 seem just a wee bit behind the science curve. (Especially since all signs point to a vaccine glut by spring.)

The new CDC advice also seems to accept, however subtly, that there is truth to the long-held belief that children are neither particularly threatened by nor vectors of this disease.

Why else would the agency tell people like vaccinated grandparents that they can interact freely indoors with unvaccinated grandchildren?

Who's going to tell the schools?

There are some galling omissions in the new guidance worth noting.

It does explicitly state that if you are vaccinated and have "been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless you have symptoms," reinforcing the belief that the vaccines not only prevent serious disease but inhibit transmission.

Yet the guidance fails to address the cause of fully vaccinated people who desire to visit COVID-positive loved ones in the hospital, which continues to be forbidden in many hospital settings.

Such stringent visitation policies have been one of the more inhumane byproducts of the pandemic.

Given what the CDC now appears to believe about fully vaccinated people, it should speak clearly on hospital visitations, since hospitals rely on its guidance to develop procedures.

As many people have noted, the CDC also failed to update its travel guidance for the fully vaccinated, and still discourages nonessential travel, which even some experts believe is overly-cautious, given what we know about the relative safety of air travel in particular.

It's worth noting that even as the gap between CDC guidance and public policy (such as Texas' lifting of mask and capacity restrictions) has grown, businesses and the public have generally erred on the side of caution, maintaining the practices that public health officials have recommended.

But as more people get vaccinated and case numbers continue to fall, it will become easier for people to ignore outdated public health advice.

I daresay, it will become incumbent upon them to get back to normal.

The CDC and public health leaders surely know that, as do the people who are awaiting a declaration that the pandemic is over. That kind of finality isn't coming, but some kind of normalcy is. And the public seems to be a few steps ahead.

Take legendary Fort Worth honky-tonk Billy Bob's Texas, which hosted a sold-out concert with 3,000 in attendance on the day the state mask and capacity mandate ended. Billy Bob's still kept capacity at 50% and recommended masks, but it did not require them.

A big crowd enjoying some great live music at Billy Bob's: It doesn't get much more normal than that.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Misinformation about COVID-19 bill

By JAY AMBROSE
Tribune News Service

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may email him at speaktojay@aol.com.

Misinformation could ruin America.

It afflicts us almost daily, could threaten our future and we have already seen some of the worst of it, we are told. Progressives say we should more strenuously limit free speech, appoint a national reality czar, establish a truth commission, blacklist the guilty and get Fox News off the air. And look, we just had another misinformation tragedy—what congressional Democrats put in a $1.9 trillion bill without a single GOP vote.

Fox News does not seem responsible, but misinformation was so overwhelming that this single most expensive piece of legislation in U.S. history was inaccurately called a COVID-19 relief bill. Fact check: Just nine percent of its funds have anything to do with COVID-19 health measures. Maybe someone told the Democrats that this identification made Republican opponents look uncaring while Democrats profit.

Oh, come off it, you say, but I've got an imagined reality czar sitting next to me, and he says that the business about political benefits is realistic but that a huge portion of this thing is a sham. He said the amount of money was a terrific debt threat, especially coming on top of some $4 trillion in past virus bills, but that he wanted to focus first on sending $170 billion to public schools refusing to open for full-time person-to-person teaching.

The lives and futures of literally millions of children, mostly poor ones, have already been severely damaged by this exclusion from classroom learning and friends, he said, even though the students would be safe from virus infection. He said $50 billion of unspent federal money is already available and that he agreed with those who say the fresh dollars should instead be sent to parents to hire tutors or to send their children to private schools, which many of the rich already do. With proper safety measures, he added, teachers are not at high risk.

Next? "Well," the czar said, "there's the matter of buying votes by sending out $1,400 checks adding up to $400 billion to individuals and couples even with fairly high rates of income to stimulate an economy that, thanks largely to reopening bars and restaurants, was already stimulated to the tune of 379,000 new jobs in February. The last time checks like this were sent out they were largely put into savings, stimulating nothing."

"Meanwhile," he went on, "many of the poor and middle-income folks are getting all kinds of prizes, some of which may have made sense if considered separately with debate. One problem is that many will now make more from this new welfare state than they would with a job, and what the economy needs are workers."

"Understand, too," he told me, "that states and cities will get some $350 billion even though something like 21 states actually did better in 2020 than in 2019 and not a few had rainy day funds that have already rescued them. Just a handful of states are in trouble, such as tourist states and those that were ill-managed, such as Gov. Andrew Cuomo's New York."

"And the economy?" I asked

"Even before this bill, our national debt owed to the public rose to 100 percent of GDP, the highest since World War II," he said. "Even though the interest rate is low, it could rise and the growing size of the debt alone could do us in as we try to pay interest off each year. President Biden is talking about higher corporate taxes, which would mean fewer jobs, lower wages, higher prices. Inflation, abetted by all the printed money, could say hello."

The source of the misinformation, he said, is the conspiracy theory that socialism works along with the usual suspects, such as Sen. Bernie Sanders and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. What's most frightening, he added, is that the misinformation about the bill has won support from 75 percent of the country. He said his information was a consequence of free speech and a free press we need more of, not less.

Disabled people and COVID-19

By E JAMAR
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

As the United States continues to lift restrictions on social distancing and wearing masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, disabled people like me are reminded that we live in a country that views us as disposable.

One tally in Britain found that roughly six out of 10 COVID-19-related deaths are of disabled people. Not only are "less severe" disabilities reported less than "severe" ones, but many of these deaths happen in nursing homes, which have been proven to underreport COVID-19 deaths.

The United States will continue to lift restrictions as more low-risk populations are vaccinated. High-risk groups are one of the last groups to be eligible to receive the vaccine, and this is no accident.

In early March, the CDC released new guidelines for vaccinated individuals, allowing them to visit "low-risk households." Disabled people will die because of it.

Our abled peers have made it no secret that they will not isolate, even if our lives depend on it. Lifting restrictions, when only roughly 9% of the population is vaccinated, invites those around us to push the limits more than they already do.

The most common phrase you'll hear if you push back on the country opening up is, "If you're high-risk, just stay home." Able-bodied people have become increasingly more vocal in their beliefs that disabled people don't deserve the same lives as their abled peers.

Not only is this line of thinking blatantly discriminatory, it's just not possible for disabled people to do.

Disabled people work full-time jobs, go to school, and have children and housemates who cannot be isolated from them. Furthermore, many disabled people require hands-on care and will never be able to isolate entirely.

Another common excuse for refusing to social distance comes from a mental health stance. Our friends and family members are going to bars, restaurants and hosting dinner parties in the name of mental health, while shrugging off the mental health struggles of disabled people, or refusing to believe we have any at all.

Assuming that disabled people can easily isolate, or that our mental health won't suffer just as much as yours from lack of social interaction is ableist in itself. Disabled people deserve the same enrichment as anyone else, but moreover, we deserve to live.

Yet every day I wake up and see a new headline that gaslights my experience and tells me that my life is disposable.

I get into arguments, I try to prove my existence to those around me, and then I go to therapy and unpack the fact that society views me as a burden weekly. It's an endless cycle with no end in sight.

Just because we've created a culture where it's acceptable to voice your disapproval of disabled lives altogether, doesn't mean that it's not violent and inhumane.

From higher COVID death rates to triage eugenics to lack of vaccine prioritization, ableism in the pandemic is raging harder than ever before, and to no surprise to disabled people.Throughout history we have resisted against the systems that have tried to kill us, and we will resist now as our government and peers continue to disregard our lives.

E Jamar is a writer and activist based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Their focus is on changing the status quo in terms of ableism, mental health and all human rights. This column was produced for the Progressive Media Project, which is run by The Progressive *magazine, and distributed by Tribune News Service.*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ayuyu Battalion thanks Stellar Marianas

The 2021 Miss Marianas Pageant was an unforgettable experience for staff members of Kagman High School's Ayuyu Battalion.

On Saturday, March 13, Kagman High School Ayuyu Battalion's C/LTC Tessa Sablan, C/CSM Thomas Agulto, C/2LT Frances Reyes, C/2LT Angelica Mario, C/CPT Jude Litulumar, and C/2LT Nobet Hocog were given the opportunity to escort V.I.P guests, performers, and even lend a helping hand behind the curtains of the pageant, all thanks to the collaboration with the amazing team over at Stellar Marianas, including Stellar Marianas president Michelle Sablan, Stellar Marianas secretary Victoria Bellas, and Ms. Bonny Cruz.

We are so thankful for the chance to have attended such a prestigious event, especially being chosen out of the many other schools on Saipan. It was truly a night like no other, not only because we were able to assist, but because we were able to see such great leadership in action.

We would like to formally congratulate the Miss Marianas contestants and our 2021 Miss Marianas, Savannah Delos Santos. May you have our community and its future at the heart of your actions. Once again, we would like to especially thank Stellar Marianas president Michelle Sablan, Stellar Marianas secretary Victorias Bellas, and Ms. Bonny Cruz. This was a night for the history books.

Ayuyu Battalion
Kagman High School

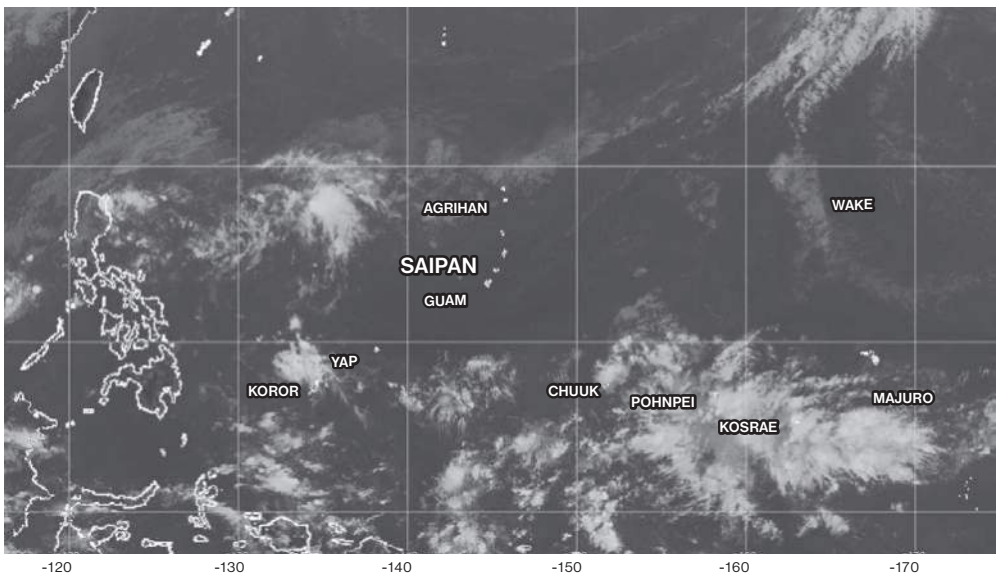
From left to right, C/2LT Nobet Hocog, C/2LT Frances Reyes, C/LTC Tessa Sablan, C/CPT Jude Litulumar, and C/2LT Angelica Mario. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.	Partly cloudy. Isolated light showers.
87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:42 AM, TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate easterly trades and a few showers are seen across the Marianas. A stationary front curves across the northern Marianas north of Pagan, while a surface trough is seen to the east, just approaching 155E. Buoys and altimetry data show seas hovering between 4 and 6 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Clear	83 | 78 °F
Palau	Overcast	88 | 76 °F
Yap	Rain	80 | 71 °F
Chuuk	Overcast	83 | 79 °F
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	82 | 79 °F
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	82 | 79 °F
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	81 | 71 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:23 AM	6:27 PM
Thursday	6:22 AM	6:27 PM
Friday	6:22 AM	6:27 PM
Saturday	6:21 AM	6:27 PM
Sunday	6:20 AM	6:28 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	8:45 AM	9:32 PM	-
Thursday	9:22 AM	10:20 PM	-
Friday	10:01 AM	11:10 PM	-
Saturday	10:44 AM	-	-
Sunday	-	12:01 AM	11:30 AM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Clear	72 | 58 °F
Beijing	Clear	60 | 39 °F
Hong Kong	Scattered Clouds	68 | 65 °F
Honolulu	Clear	84 | 68 °F
London	Mist	56 | 41 °F
Los Angeles	Clear	90 | 75 °F
Manila	Clear	90 | 75 °F
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	78 | 58 °F
Miami	Mostly Cloudy	71 | 56 °F
New York	Clear	35 | 24 °F
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	56 | 37 °F
Paris	Clear	65 | 43 °F
Pusan	Clear	61 | 36 °F
Rome	Clear	64 | 41 °F
Salem	Overcast	55 | 37 °F
San Francisco	Overcast	62 | 49 °F
Seoul	Clear	59 | 34 °F
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	62 | 37 °F
Washington, DC	Clear	42 | 37 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:03 AM	Low Tide	0.56
9:46 AM	High Tide	1.68
4:29 PM	Low Tide	0.31
10:37 PM	High Tide	1.57

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 5, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 5, 6
UA117	7:00am	7:40am	4

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1, 5 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 5, 6
UA174	5:15am	5:56am	4

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:55pm	5:56am+1	3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 9, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

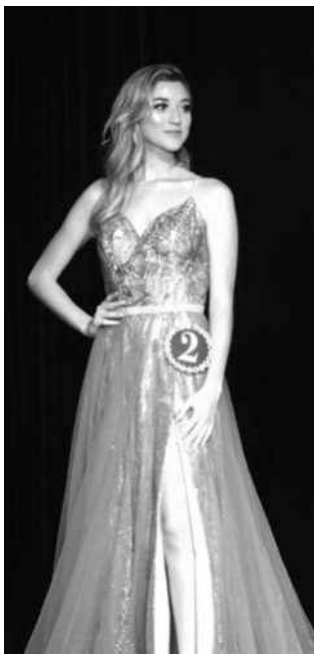
TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

2021 Miss Marianas Pageant

Photos by NEIL FAMA

2019 Miss Marianas Shannon Sasamoto makes her final walk during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.



Contestant No. 2 Lily Carillo poses in her evening gown during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 1 Vincent Rabasto showcases her evening gown during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 3 Toremy Diaz, who also received the People's Choice award, showcases her evening gown during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 6 Bernadette Horey showcases her evening gown during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 7 Richelle Ramon showcases her evening gown during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 2 Lily Carillo, left and contestant No. 1 Vincent Rabasto, right, pose in the swimsuit competition of the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

Contestant No. 6 Bernadette Horey and contestant No. 8 Savannah Delos Santos await the naming of the 2021 Miss Marianas during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant.

Contestant No. 5 Ha'Ane San Nicolas Eugenio wins Miss Marianas 2nd Runner Up during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 8 Savannah Delos Santos receives the Best in National Costume, Best in Evening Gown, and Miss Friendship awards during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 6 Bernadette Horey is declared Miss Marianas 1st Runner Up and also won the Miss Photogenic award during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 7 Richelle Ramon receives the Best in Swimsuit award during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

2019 Miss Marianas Shannon Sasamoto places the tiara on Savannah Relox Delos Santos, crowning her as 2021 Miss Marianas during the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Contestant No. 1 Vincent Rabasto receives the Stellar Star award and Tresemme Best in Hair award at the 2021 Miss Marianas pageant last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Business

US air travel rises to highest levels yet since pandemic hit

AP
In this Tuesday, March 9, 2021 file photo, travelers walk through the Salt Lake City International Airport, in Salt Lake City.

Across the United States, air travel is recovering more quickly from the depths of the pandemic, and it is showing up in longer airport security lines and busier traffic on airline websites.

The Transportation Security Administration screened more than 1.3 million people both Friday and Sunday, setting a new high since the coronavirus outbreak devastated travel a year ago. Airlines say they believe the numbers are heading up, with more people booking flights for spring and summer.

"Our last three weeks have been the best three weeks since the pandemic hit, and each week has been better than the one prior," American Airlines CEO Doug Parker said Monday.

Airline stocks rose across the board. Shares of the four biggest U.S. carriers hit their highest prices in more than a year.

However, the airlines still have far to go before travel fully returns to pre-pandemic levels.

While the number of people passing through airport checkpoints has topped 1 million for four straight days and the 7-day rolling average is the highest in the pandemic era, passenger traffic is still down more than 50% in March compared with the same period in 2019.

Parker said American's bookings are now running just 20% below 2019 levels. A factor appears to be traveler confidence now that more people are getting vaccinated against COVID-19. About 70 million Americans, or 21%, have received at least one dose, and 37 million have completed their vaccination, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian said Monday that bookings began picking up five or six weeks ago.

Since the pandemic hit, air travel has picked up a few times—mostly around holidays—only to drop back down. This time, the recovery "seems like it's real," Bastian said during the same J.P. Morgan investor conference at which Parker spoke.

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said his airline will generate "core" cash instead of burning cash for March, and he expects the positive trend to continue in the months ahead.

Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly said during a Washington Post webcast that his airline could break even by June, "where you have had much of the population vaccinated."

Southwest said in a regulatory filing that for March and April will be better than expected as passenger traffic and fares rise. The airline said people are booking leisure trips to beach and mountain destinations but business travel is still lagging.

United led a rally in airlines shares, closing up 8.3%. American gained 7.7%, Delta rose 2.3%, and Southwest added 1.8%. ***(AP)***

Facebook to label vaccine posts to combat COVID-19 misinfo

LONDON (AP)—Facebook is adding informational labels to posts about vaccines as it expands efforts to counter COVID-19-related misinformation flourishing on its platforms.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a blog post Monday that labels will contain "credible information" about the vaccines from the World Health Organization. They will be in English and five other languages, with more languages added in coming weeks.

"For example, we're adding a label on posts that discuss the safety of COVID-19 vaccines that notes COVID-19 vaccines go through tests for safety and effectiveness before they're approved," Zuckerberg said.

The social network is also adding a tool to help get users vaccinated by connecting them to information about where and when they can get their shot.

Facebook and Instagram have been criticized for allowing anti-vaccination propaganda to spread and for being woefully slow in weeding out the misinformation, often with fact-checks, labels and other restrained measures.

"This announcement falls well short of what is needed to solve the crisis of anti-vaccine lies polluting social media users' timelines," said Imran Ahmed, CEO of the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate, a critic of social media companies' handling of hate speech and misinformation.

"Facebook and Instagram still do not remove the vast majority of posts reported to them for containing dangerous misinformation about vaccines," her said "The main superspreaders of anti-vaccine lies all still have a presence on Instagram or Facebook, despite promises to remove them. And the evidence suggests that the way Facebook applies labels to misinformation posts has minimal impact."

For years, Facebook and other social platforms have allowed anti-vaccination propaganda to flourish, making it difficult to stamp out such sentiments now. And their efforts to weed out other types of COVID-19 misinformation—often with fact-checks, informational labels and other restrained measures, has been woefully slow.

Automakers embrace electric vehicles. But what about buyers?

DETROIT (AP)—The world's major automakers have made something abundantly clear: They believe electric vehicles will dominate their industry in the years ahead.

Yet for that to happen, they'll need to sell the idea to people like Steve Bock.

When Bock recently replaced his family's 2013 Honda Pilot SUV, he considered—and then dismissed—the idea of buying an electric vehicle. An EV with enough room to carry his two dogs would cost too much, he decided. And he'd worry about driving long distances with too few charging stations.

"I would consider it if the prices would come down," Bock said, though leaving open the possibility of buying an electric vehicle next time.

Instead, Bock, of suburban Raleigh, North Carolina, settled on a Subaru Outback. Like nearly every other vehicle sold in the United States, it runs on gasoline.

Opinion polls show that a substantial majority of Americans are aligned with Bock. An EV might be on their shopping list if it cost less, if more charging stations existed and if a wider variety of models were available. In other words, the time isn't right.

It adds up to a significant risk for the largest automakers. With governments across the globe intensifying efforts to reverse climate change, the automakers are staking their futures on the notion that consumers will soon be ready to buy vehicles that run not on the internal combustion engines that have powered cars and trucks for more than a century but on electricity stored in a battery pack.

General Motors, Ford and Volkswagen plan to spend a combined $77 billion developing global electric vehicles over the next five years, with models from pickup trucks to small SUVs. GM has gone so far as to announce a goal of ending gasoline- and diesel-fueled passenger vehicles entirely by 2035 – and to become carbon-neutral by 2040.

For the automakers, the risk is as hazardous as it is simple: What if American consumers reject electric vehicles for many years to come?

Companies would have no choice but to discount them and hope, in the meantime, that their profits from gas vehicles would still cover their costs—at least until large proportions of buyers gravitated toward EVs.

If they don't, the financial blow could be heavy. For now, EVs make up less than 2% of U.S. new-vehicle sales and about 3% worldwide.

"It's still a sector that doesn't have a mass appeal to the entire population," said Jeff Schuster, president of global vehicle forecasting for LMC Automotive, a consulting firm. "It could be a financial drain if consumers do not buy at the same level."

Yet in contrast to the United States, sales of EVs have taken off in Europe and China, largely because of much more far-reaching pollution regulations and government incentives. Those tighter environmental regulations are forcing the industry to sell more electric vehicles.

In Europe, carmakers unveiled a slew of new electric models ahead of lower EU limits on average emissions of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas blamed for climate change, that took full effect at the start of this year. Government-backed incentives can cut the cost to near that of an internal combustion vehicle.

The result: Nearly 730,000 battery vehicles were sold in Europe in 2020—more than 300,000 of them in the final three months of the year. The market share of electric vehicles—battery-only and plug-in hybrids—jumped from 3% to 10.5%. By December, their share had reached nearly one in four.

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
32,953.46	3,968.94	13,459.71
0.53%	0.65%	1.05%
+174.82	+25.60	+139.84

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.2902	Hong Kong Dollar	7.7644	Russian Ruble	72.0836
British Pound	0.7208	Indian Rupee	72.1406	Singapore Dollar	1.3442
Canadian Dollar	1.2480	Japanese Yen	109.1050	South Korean Won	1110.71
Chinese Yuan	6.4032	Malaysian Ringgit	4.0784	Swiss Franc	0.9262
Euro	0.8380	New Zealand Dollar	1.3899	Taiwan Dollar	27.8206
		Philippine Peso	47.7163	Thailand Baht	30.7030

Nation

Defense in ex-cop's trial fears impact of $27M settlement

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—An attorney for a former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's death asked the judge Monday to delay the trial, saying the announcement of a $27 million settlement for Floyd's family could make a fair trial impossible.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson also raised the possibility of renewing his previously unsuccessful motion to move Derek Chauvin's trial to another city.

"I am gravely concerned with the news that broke on Friday," Nelson said, adding that the announcement "has incredible potential to taint the jury pool."

Nelson also noted that Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison's son Jeremiah sits on the City Council that unanimously approved the settlement, and questioned the timing, though he said he was not making accusations. Keith Ellison heads the prosecution team and often has been present in the courtroom.

During a break in jury selection, Keith Ellison stopped at Nelson's table and said: "Is there anything else anyone would like to not accuse me of?" Nelson looked at Ellison but did not reply.

Mayor Jacob Frey deferred questions about the timing of the settlement to City Attorney Jim Rowader, who declined to comment. Representatives for both said they were following the judge's guidance to not comment on the criminal proceedings.

Prosecutor Steve Schleicher said the state had no control over Frey and the City Council, who announced Friday that Minneapolis had agreed to the settlement that Floyd family attorney Ben Crump called the largest pretrial settlement ever for a civil rights claim.

Absent a delay or change of venue, Nelson urged Hennepin County District Judge Peter Cahill to consider giving both sides extra strikes to remove potential jurors for possible bias, and to recall the seven jurors seated last week to ask if the settlement affected their view of the case.

But Schleicher said those jurors already promised they could decide the case based only on evidence presented at trial and urged the court to "take a step back" and determine whether there's an actual problem.

"You would agree it's unfortunate, right?" Cahill asked.

"It's certainly not my preference, your honor," Schleicher replied, adding that it was unclear whether the settlement news would "cut" in favor of the prosecution or the defense.

"The problem is, it cuts," Cahill said.

Cahill agreed to consider the request for a delay, but didn't think it would be appropriate to grant additional strikes to either side. He said he likely would recall the seven previously seated jurors for further questioning though he already instructed members of the jury pool to avoid all news coverage of the case.

Andrew Cuomo accuser speaks with investigators for 4 hours

As New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo tried to return to the business of governing Monday, one of his sexual harassment accusers met via Zoom for more than four hours with investigators working for the state attorney general's office.

During the interview, Charlotte Bennett revealed new details about Cuomo's behavior and what she said was a "sexually hostile work environment," according to her lawyer, including a claim the governor frequently made suggestive remarks about the size of his hands.

"One piece of new information that came to light today was the Governor's preoccupation with his hand size and what the large size of his hands indicated to Charlotte and other members of his staff," her lawyer, Debra Katz, said in a statement.

Bennett also provided investigators with 120 pages of records to corroborate her accusations, according to Katz.

Bennett, 25, is one of a number of women who have accused Cuomo of workplace harassment. Some have said Cuomo demeaned them with pet nicknames or objectifying remarks about their appearance, subjected them to unwanted kisses and touches or asked them about their sex lives. A few, including Bennett, said they believed the governor was probing their interest in a sexual relationship.

'Big burden' for schools trying to give internet access to kids

When the coronavirus pandemic shut down schools, educators had to figure out how to get kids online. Fast.

In a patchwork approach born of desperation, they scrounged wireless hot spots, struck deals with cable companies and even created networks of their own.

With federal relief money and assistance from state governments and philanthropists, they have helped millions of students get online for distance learning. Still, a year into the pandemic, millions of others remain without internet because of financial hurdles and logistical difficulties in getting students what they need.

There will soon be more money for schools to provide internet, as well as programs that aim to make internet more affordable. The $1.9 trillion stimulus package that President Joe Biden signed Thursday contains $7 billion for distance learning. Advocates working to address the digital divide say the new funding will be groundbreaking for schools' efforts to connect students.

In Chicago, philanthropy paid for nearly half the $50 million, four-year Chicago Connected program, which pays for kids' home internet if they qualify for reduced-price lunches. Chicago Public Schools, the country's third-largest district, is on the hook for $25 million.

About one-fifth of the 242,000 students who are eligible have gotten internet.

Cherelle Bilal said her free Chicago Connected internet service was crucial to helping her four kids actually attend school, even though they still struggle with staying focused in a virtual classroom. Before, "it was horrible," she said. Her existing service was inadequate.

FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY
†Vicente (Ben) Cabrera Attao
JULY 19, 1952- MARCH 26, 2020
We, the family of the late †Vicente Cabrera Attao - lovingly known as "Ben," would like to invite all our relatives and friends to join us in the Eucharistic Celebration as we commemorate the First Anniversary of our beloved Father, Grandfather, Great Grandfather, Son, Brother and Uncle passing unto eternal life.
Daily mass will be held at Mount Carmel Cathedral beginning March 18 - March 26, 2021 at 6:00am. On Sunday, March 21st, Mass is at 9:00am.
Your presence, thoughts and prayer are greatly appreciated.
May our Lord bless each of you.
Un dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Hiimaqis Qe'ciyew'yew.
Wife: Elizabeth Arthur Attao
Children: Ina Attao — Juana (Karl Ada), Naomi, John Vincent Camacho and Vicente Leon Guerrero,
Kristine Attao — Kristina (Drew Waits - Roman and William), Samuel, James Jr. and Elizabeth Greene,
Catherine Attao and Mark Toves — Joseph Attao, Markel, Theresa, Merrick and Markus Toves and Raymond Mercado
Sisters: Celina A & Aldebert Concepcion and Family, Maria Ramona "Marlene" A. & Ricardo Balajadia and Family
Extended Family: Florencia Gacutan (Ronald Miraflor) and children

Asia

AS MINISTERS MEET IN TOKYO

Japan, US to share China concern

TOKYO (AP)—Defense and foreign ministers from the U.S. and Japan are to discuss their concern over China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region as the Biden administration tries to reaffirm engagement with its key regional allies.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken are to hold so-called "two plus two" security talks on Tuesday with their Japanese counterparts, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi. The U.S. ministers arrived in Tokyo late Monday.

President Joe Biden's decision to send his key ministers to Japan as their first overseas visit—rather than hosting Japanese officials in Washington—means a lot for Japan, which considers its alliance with the U.S. "the cornerstone" of its diplomatic and security policies.

That shows "the U.S emphasis on the Japan-U.S. alliance," Motegi said in a parliamentary session Monday. He said China will be the topic he and Blinken discuss most, including how they can bolster their deterrence and response capability in answer to China.

Japan is in a delicate diplomatic situation because its economy, like those of other countries in the region, heavily depends on China.

But it considers China's escalating maritime activity in the region a security threat. Beijing has built militarized manmade islands in the South China Sea and is pressing its claim to virtually all of the sea's key fisheries and waterways. Japan is concerned about China's claim to the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, called Diaoyu in China, in the East China Sea and its increased activity in the disputed area.

China has denied it is expansionist and said it is only defending its territorial rights.

On the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, Blinken and Austin are expected to discuss the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, as well as the nuclear threat posed by North Korea and the situation in Myanmar after its military coup.

Japan and the U.S. are expected to reaffirm the importance of their three-way alliance with South Korea and may touch on the strained relations between Tokyo and Seoul over wartime compensation issues, but the issue is expected to be brought up in a subtle manner, Japanese officials said.

Later Tuesday, they will meet with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who is expected to visit Washington sometime in the first half of April to meet with Biden in person—becoming the first foreign leader to do so since he became president in January.

In a move meant to signal his intention for the U.S. to return to more engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, Biden on Friday held a first summit of the leaders from Australia, Japan, India and the U.S. known as the "Quad" virtually and emphasized Washington's commitment to the region.

Blinken and Austin on Wednesday will head to South Korea, another key reginal ally.

Blinken will meet senior Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska, on their way back to Washington. Austin will go from Seoul to New Delhi for meetings with Indian leaders.

North criticizes US-South Korean drills before allies meet

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—In North Korea's first comments directed at the Biden administration, Kim Jong Un's powerful sister criticized the United States and South Korea for holding military exercises and warned the U.S. against further provocations if it wants a "good night's sleep for the next four years."

Kim Yo Jong's statement Tuesday was issued as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Asia to talk to U.S. allies Japan and South Korea about North Korea and other regional issues. They have meetings in Tokyo on Tuesday before speaking to officials in Seoul the next day.

North Korea would consider abandoning a 2018 bilateral agreement on reducing military tensions and abolish a decades-old ruling party unit tasked to handle inter-Korean relations if it no longer had to cooperate with the South, said Kim Yo Jong, a senior official who handles inter-Korean affairs for the North.

She said the North would also consider scrapping an office that handled South Korean tours to the North's scenic Diamond Mountain, which Seoul suspended in 2008 after a North Korean guard fatally shot a South Korean tourist.

"We will keep an eye on (South Korea's) attitude and behavior, and if they become more provocative, we could take exceptional measures," she said in her statement published in Pyongyang's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to issue a word of advice to the new U.S. administration, which is so eager to give off a smell of gunpowder in our land from across the ocean," she said. "If they want to have a good night's sleep for the next four years, it would be good for them not to do things that would prevent them from sleeping properly from the start."

Challenges posed by North Korea's nuclear arsenal and China's growing influence loom large in the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, part of a larger effort to bolster U.S. influence and clam concerns about the U.S. role in Asia following four years of Donald Trump's "America first" approach.

A senior official from the Biden administration said Saturday that U.S. officials have tried to reach out to North Korea through multiple channels since last month, but have yet to receive a response. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss the diplomatic outreach and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"This is Kim Yo Jong continuing to be the tip of the wedge North Korea tries to drive between South Korea and its U.S. ally," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha University in Seoul. "North Korea's latest threats mean the allies have precious little time to coordinate their approaches on deterrence, sanctions and engagement."

Biden's presidency begins as Kim Jong Un faces perhaps the toughest moment of his nine-year rule. His country's battered economy has decayed further amid pandemic border closures while his summitry with Trump failed to lift crippling sanctions.

While Kim has vowed to strengthen his nuclear weapons program in recent political speeches, he also has said the fate of U.S. relations depends on Washington's actions.

World

Major European countries suspend use of AstraZeneca

BERLIN (AP)—A cascading number of European countries—including Germany, France, Italy and Spain—suspended use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine Monday over reports of dangerous blood clots in some recipients, though the company and international regulators say there is no evidence the shot is to blame.

AP

A medical staff dispays AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination site set up in the Marseille soccer Velodrome stadium, during a presentation to the media, in Marseille, Monday, March 15, 2021.

AstraZeneca's formula is one of three vaccines in use on the continent. But the escalating concern is another setback for the European Union's vaccination drive, which has been plagued by shortages and other hurdles and is lagging well behind the campaigns in Britain and the U.S.

The EU's drug regulatory agency called a meeting for Thursday to review experts' findings on the AstraZeneca shot and decide whether action needs to be taken.

The furor comes as much of Europe is tightening restrictions on schools and businesses amid surging cases of COVID-19.

Germany's health minister said the decision to suspend AstraZeneca shots was taken on the advice of the country's vaccine regulator, the Paul Ehrlich Institute, which called for further investigation into seven cases of clots in the brains of people who had been vaccinated.

"Today's decision is a purely precautionary measure," Jens Spahn said.

French President Emmanuel Macron said his country will likewise stop dispensing the vaccine until at least Tuesday afternoon. Italy also announced a temporary ban, as did Spain, Portugal and Slovenia.

Other countries that have done so over the past few days include Denmark, which was the first, as well as Ireland, Thailand, the Netherlands, Norway, Iceland, Congo and Bulgaria. Canada and Britain are standing by the vaccine for now.

In the coming weeks, AstraZeneca is expected to apply for U.S. authorization of its vaccine. The U.S. now relies on Pfizer's, Moderna's and Johnson & Johnson's shots.

AstraZeneca said there have been 37 reports of blood clots out of more than 17 million people vaccinated in the 27-country EU and Britain. The drugmaker said there is no evidence the vaccine carries an increased risk of clots.

In fact, it said the incidence of clots is much lower than would be expected to occur naturally in a general population of this size and is similar to that of other licensed COVID-19 vaccines.

Vatican bars gay union blessing, says God 'can't bless sin'

ROME (AP)—The Vatican declared Monday that the Catholic Church won't bless same-sex unions since God "cannot bless sin."

The Vatican's orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a formal response to a question about whether Catholic clergy have the authority to bless gay unions. The answer, contained in a two-page explanation published in seven languages and approved by Pope Francis, was "negative."

The note distinguished between the church's welcoming and blessing of gay people, which it upheld, but not their unions. It argued that such unions are not part of God's plan and that any sacramental recognition of them could be confused with marriage.

The note immediately pleased conservatives, disheartened advocates for LGBT Catholics and threw a wrench in the debate within the German church, which has been at the forefront of opening discussion on hot-button issues such the church's teaching on homosexuality.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, which advocates for greater acceptance of gays in the church, predicted the Vatican position would be ignored, including by some Catholic clergy.

"Catholic people recognize the holiness of the love between committed same-sex couples and recognize this love as divinely inspired and divinely supported and thus meets the standard to be blessed," he said in a statement.

The Vatican holds that gay people must be treated with dignity and respect, but that gay sex is "intrinsically disordered." Catholic teaching says that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and woman, is part of God's plan and is intended for the sake of creating new life.

Since gay unions aren't intended to be part of that plan, they can't be blessed by the church, the document said.

"The presence in such relationships of positive elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator's plan," the response said.

God "does not and cannot bless sin: He blesses sinful man, so that he may recognize that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him," it said.

Francis has endorsed providing gay couples with legal protections in same-sex unions, but that was in reference to the civil sphere, not within the church. Those comments were made during a 2019 interview with a Mexican broadcaster, Televisa, but were censored by the Vatican until they appeared in a documentary last year.

Life & Style

‘Mank’ leads Oscar nominations in a year of record diversity

NEW YORK (AP)—After a pandemic year that shuttered movie theaters and upended the movie business, Academy Awards nominations on Monday went to two female filmmakers for the first time, to a historically diverse slate of actors and to David Fincher’s lead-nominee “Mank,” a traditional kind of Oscar contender—an old Hollywood homage—in very untraditional year.

Fincher’s “Mank,” a black-and-white, period drama about “Citizen Kane” screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz, easily topped nominations for the 93rd Academy Awards—delayed two months by the coronavirus pandemic—with 10 nominations, including best picture, best director, acting nods for Gary Oldman and Amanda Seyfried, and a host of others for its lavish craft.

Nominations were spread among a wide variety of contenders. Six films, all of them also up for best picture, score six nods: “Judas and the Black Messiah,” “Nomadland,” “Minari,” “Sound of Metal,” “The Trial of the Chicago 7” and “The Father.” Also nominated for best picture was Emerald Fennell’s “Promising Young Woman.”

History was made in the best director category. Only five women have ever been nominated before. For the first time, two were this year. Chloé Zhao got a nod for her elegiac road-trip drama “Nomadland” alongside first-time feature filmmaker Fennell for her pitch black #MeToo revenge comedy. “Never going to stop crying,” Fennell, also nominated for best screenplay, said on Twitter.

Zhao, the first woman of color nominated for best director, is the most nominated woman in a single year in Oscar history. She was also tipped for the film’s adapted screenplay, editing and as a producer in the best picture category. The other directing nominees were Lee Isaac Chung for the tender family drama “Minari,” Fincher for “Mank” and Thomas Vinterberg for his heavy-drinking Danish tragicomedy “Another Round.”

For performers, it’s the most diverse group of nominees ever—and a far cry from the all-white acting nods that spawned the #OscarsSoWhite hashtag five years ago. Nine of the 20 acting nominees are people of color, including a posthumous best-actor nomination for Chadwick Boseman (“Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom”), as well as nods for Riz Ahmed (“Sound of Metal”), Steven Yeun (“Minari”), Viola Davis (“Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom”) and Andra Day (“The People vs. Billie Holiday”) and supporting nominations for Daniel Kaluuya and Lakeith Stanfield (“Judas and the Black Messiah”), Leslie Odom Jr. (“One Night in Miami”) and Yuh-Jung Youn (“Minari”).

“We have to recognize how hard these people have worked,” said Day, nominated for her performance as Billie Holiday. “We have to recognize their talent.”

“When you hear your own name it’s a weird feeling,” said Ahmed, the first Muslim nominated for best actor. “I just quietly gave thanks and felt some gratitude.”

Davis, who won for her performance in 2016’s “Fences,” landed her fourth Oscar nomination, making her the most nominated Black actress ever. Yeun is the first Asian American ever nominated for best actor. “Judas and the Black Messiah,” Shaka King’s powerful Black Panther drama, is the first best-picture nominee with an all-Black producing team (King along with Ryan Coogler and Charles D. King). Overall, a record 70 women were nominated for 76 Oscars, the academy said.

NETFLIX VIA AP

In this image released by Netflix, Amanda Seyfried, left, and Gary Oldman appear in a scene from “Mank.”

The other nominees for best actress are: Carey Mulligan (“Promising Young Woman”); Frances McDormand (“Nomadland”); Vanessa Kirby (“Pieces of a Woman”). The remaining nominee for best actor is Anthony Hopkins for the dementia drama “The Father.”

With moviegoing nearly snuffed out by the coronavirus, the best-picture nominees had hardly any box office to speak of: $14.1 million in U.S. and Canada ticket sales. For the first time, Hollywood’s biggest and most sough-after awards belong to movies that were almost entirely seen at home.

“We learned a lot of hard lessons last year, but a nice one was that people will find a way to go to the movies, even if they can only go as far as their living rooms,” said Aaron Sorkin, writer-director of “The Trial of the Chicago 7,” in a statement.

Netflix, as expected, led all studios with 35 nominations. The streaming service is still hunting its first best-picture winner, and this year has two shots in “Mank” and “The Trial of the Chicago 7”—a movie Paramount Pictures sold off during the pandemic. Netflix led last year, too, with 24 nominations, but came away with just two wins.

Other streamers were in the mix. Amazon Studios, in particular, was well represented with “Sound of Metal,” “Borat Subsequent Moviefilm” and “One Night in Miami”—leading to 12 nominations overall. Both Apple TV+ (“Wolfwalkers,” “Greyhound”) and Disney+ (“Soul,” “Onward”) landed their first nominations. The film that tried to lead a box-office revival—Christopher Nolan’s “Tenet”—walked away with nominations for production design and visual effects.

The nominations were announced from London by presenters Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra Jonas. The Academy Awards would typically have happened by now but this year will be telecast April 25. The film academy said Monday that the show will be held at both its usual home, the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, and the city’s railway hub, Union Station.

This year’s awards season—typically a monthslong circuit of screenings, cocktail parties and schmoozing—has been entirely virtual, taking much of the buzz and predictability out of the Oscars. Eligibility was extended to early 2021 releases and to movies that bypassed theaters.

“In our industry there is nothing more traditional than the Academy Awards, which hopefully sends a sign of hope that we will get out of this,” said Oldman in a statement. “The Oscars are such a sign that normalcy still exists.”

Among the films that had hoped for a better result Monday was Spike Lee’s “Da 5 Bloods”—which was nominated only for its score. Just eight out of a possible 10 movies were nominated for best picture, leaving out “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” Regina King’s “One Night in Miami” and Golden Globe winner “Borat Subsequent Moviefilm.”

Despite the best-picture snub for “Borat,” Sacha Baron Cohen, who created the title character, was still a nominee for his supporting role as activist Abbie Hoffman in “The Trial of the Chicago 7,” and “Borat” star Maria Bakalova was nominated for best supporting actress. Also nominated in the category: Glenn Close for “Hillbilly Elegy” and Olivia Colman for “The Father.”

The most competitive category might have been documentary, where “Collective,” “Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution,” “The Mole Agent,” My Octopus Teacher” and “Time” ultimately landed nominations. “Collective,” the Romanian documentary about investigative journalism and government corruption, became just the second film nominated for both best documentary and best international film. The other international film nominees were “Quo Vadis, Aida?,” Bosnia and Herzegovina; “Another Round,” Denmark; “Better Days,” Hong Kong; and “The Man Who Sold His Skin,” Tunisia.

Happy host decline help in the kitchen with a poem

DEAR ABBY: I have seen letters in your column from people upset that their guests don't help them after dinner. I am the opposite. I held onto a poem you printed years ago and had it perma-plaqued and posted on a kitchen cabinet.

For more than 20 years, my husband and I hosted a dinner every Sunday after church. I set the table for 10, but we often had more. When guests offered to help, I handed them a copy of that poem. Could you print it again for your readers?

FAITHFUL FOLLOWER IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR FOLLOWER: Gladly. That poem has been requested many times over the years. It resonates with hosts who are territorial about their space when entertaining. It is included in my booklet "Keepers," which is a collection of poems, essays and letters readers have told me they clipped and saved to reread until they were yellowed with age and fell apart. You were clever to perma-plaque yours. "Keepers" is both witty and philosophical. It covers many subjects including children, parenting, animals, aging, death, forgiveness and more. It can be ordered by sending your name and address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to Dear Abby Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

It's a quick and easy read as well as an inexpensive gift for newlyweds, pet lovers, new parents and anyone grieving or recovering from an illness.

STAY OUT OF MY KITCHEN by Susan Sawyer
Please stay away from my kitchen
From my dishwashing, cooking and such;
You were kind to have offered to pitch in
But thanks, no, thank you so much!
Please don't think me ungracious
When I ask that you leave me alone;
For my kitchen's not any too spacious
And my routine is strictly my own.
Tell you what: You stay out of my kitchen
With its sodden, hot, lackluster lures—
When you're here, stay out of my kitchen
And I promise to stay out of yours!

DEAR ABBY: I had weight-loss surgery six months ago. I haven't had the dramatic transformation that some people experience. I've only lost about 50 pounds.

My problem is, friends who know I had the operation keep asking me how much weight I lost. I think it's a rude question and none of their business. I understand people are curious, especially since they haven't seen me in person because of COVID restrictions. How do I answer without saying, "None of your business"?

LOSING IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR LOSING: Your friends may just be curious and want to congratulate you on a big loss, and 50 pounds is one. That said, you do not have to answer every question that is asked. All you need to say is, "I'll let you guess once you see me again." If they ask for a hint, stick to your guns and change the subject. Then consider this: They may be gauging the success of your surgery for themselves.

DEAR READERS: Today's the day for the wearing of the green. A very happy St. Patrick's Day to you all!

LOVE, ABBY

DEAR ABBY

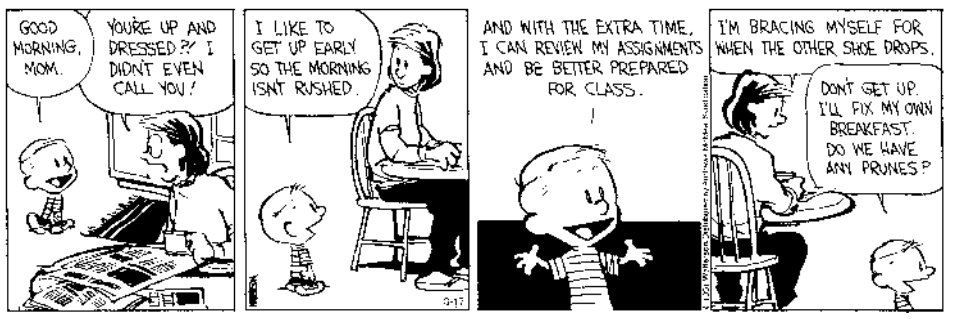
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


GOOD MORNING, MOM.
YOU'RE UP AND DRESSED?! I DIDN'T EVEN CALL YOU!
I LIKE TO GET UP EARLY SO THE MORNING ISN'T RUSHED.
AND WITH THE EXTRA TIME, I CAN REVIEW MY ASSIGNMENTS AND BE BETTER PREPARED FOR CLASS.
I'M BRACING MYSELF FOR WHEN THE OTHER SHOE DROPS.
DON'T GET UP. I'LL FIX MY OWN BREAKFAST. DO WE HAVE ANY PRUNES?

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

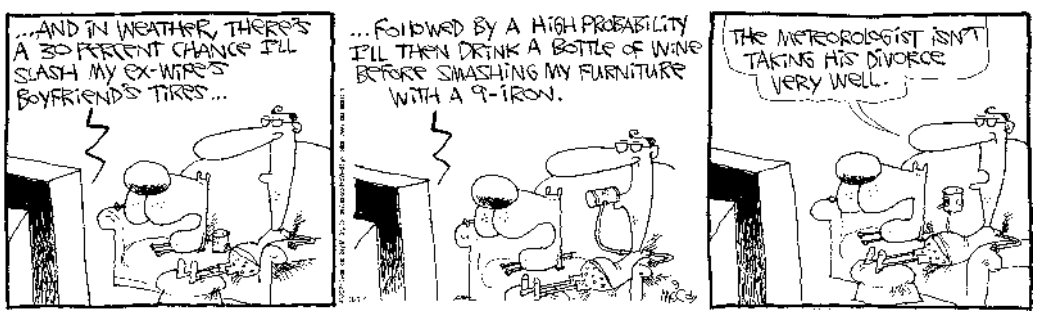
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

I'D LIKE ONE COPY OF THE V.R. GAME "HYPEREXTENDED KNEE".
I'LL NEED TO SEE AN I.D. AND HAVE YOU SIGN THIS LIABILITY WAIVER.
M'KAY.
ABOUT THIS GAME...
I JUST SELL 'EM, SIR. PRESS HARD. IT'S IN TRIPLICATE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


...AND IN WEATHER, THERE'S A 30 PERCENT CHANCE I'LL SLASH MY EX-WIFE'S BOYFRIEND'S TIRES...
...FOLLOWED BY A HIGH PROBABILITY I'LL THEN DRINK A BOTTLE OF WINE BEFORE SMASHING MY FURNITURE WITH A 9-IRON.
THE METEOROLOGIST ISN'T TAKING HIS DIVORCE VERY WELL.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Coral formation
5 Priestly garment
8 Junk email
12 Jocular Johnson
13 Perfume label word
14 Mexican snack
15 Dressmaker's blueprints
17 "Leave — me"
18 Plaster finish
19 Zodiac crab
21 Uplands, for short
22 Laurie or Grant
23 Little rascal
26 Gut-punch reaction
28 Nourishes
31 Gravy vessel
33 Napkin's place
35 Numbered rds.
36 Choral composition
38 Hearty brew
40 Heavy weight
41 — avis
43 "Bow-wow!"
45 Pizza servings
47 TV detective Remington
51 Couturier Chanel
52 Like many inventions
54 Four Corners St.
55 Jargon suffix
56 Batting practice area
57 Crucial time
58 "Morning Edition" airer
59 Thames town

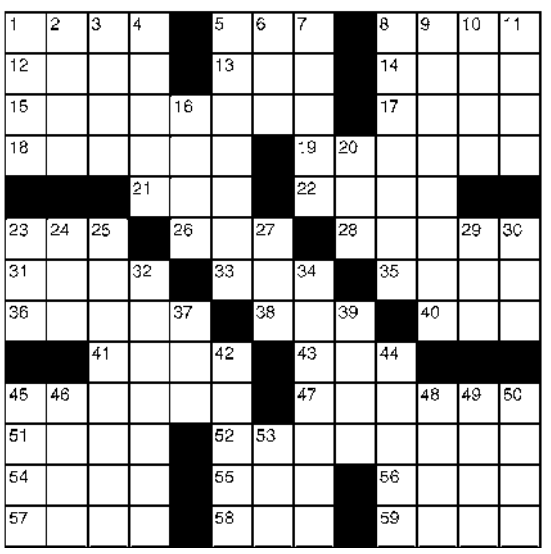
DOWN

1 Knocks
2 Part of Q.E.D.
3 Words to a backstabber
4 Command to Fido
5 Spray can
6 PC linking system
7 — Gardens (amusement park)
8 Brandy cocktail
9 "The Dutch House" author Ann
10 Part of a French play
11 Heath
16 Outside (Pref.)
20 "— Wiedersehen"
23 "Big Blue"
24 Cattle call
25 "Medium" actress Arquette
27 Air safety org.
29 "Gloria in Excelsis —"
30 Nine-digit ID
32 Cover for a darjeeling brewer
34 Wall coating
37 Three, in Rome
39 Deco artist
42 Colorado music festival town
44 Yard barrier
45 Large amount
46 Parliamentarian
48 Coup d'—
49 Toy block name
50 Idyllic place
53 Nile reptile

Solution time: 23 mins.

F	I	S	H	■	P	A	I	■	J	O	T	S
U	M	P	S	■	S	R	I	■	B	E	T	■
J	O	A	N	B	A	E	Z	■	M	O	R	E
N	N	■	R	L	S	■	C	B	E	R	S	■
■	■	■	J	A	M	■	B	O	O	■	■	■
■	A	P	A	S	■	S	U	B	U	R	B	S
A	L	E	C	■	C	C	Y	■	O	V	S	■
P	A	C	K	E	R	S	■	C	O	N	E	S
■	■	■	B	O	Y	■	P	U	N	■	■	■
P	A	L	S	■	S	I	R	■	U	N	A	■
L	S	A	■	J	C	E	B	■	D	E	N	■
A	L	C	■	I	S	R	■	R	O	O	T	■
R	F	K	■	G	A	S	■	A	N	N	S	■

Yesterday's answer 3-17



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mia Hamm, 49; Rob Lowe, 57; Gary Sinise, 66; Kurt Russell, 70.

Happy Birthday: Methodically approach the changes you want to make this year. Reasonable expectations coupled with discipline and determination will result in the success you are chasing. Take care of administrative matters with detail and precision in order to avoid setbacks. Preparation and paying attention will be instrumental in helping you achieve your goals. Keep promises, and you'll avoid disputes. Your numbers are 7, 12, 24, 27, 30, 33, 44.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Connect with people who share interests, ideologies and pursuits, and you will develop a plan that is groundbreaking, trendy and has the potential to be highly successful. Pace yourself and do things right the first time; everything else will fall into place. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Make up your mind. If you are indecisive, someone will jump in and take control. Don't take on too much or any responsibilities that don't belong to you. A steadfast approach and a show of self-confidence will help you gain respect. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Take the initiative instead of leaving the work for someone else. Put your mark on whatever you do, and you will get the credit you deserve. You'll get more done if you work alone. Avoid getting into senseless discussions. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* It's up to you to change things up a bit. Use your imagination, and you'll come up with an awe-inspiring plan that will lead to more significant opportunities. A partnership looks inviting as long as it doesn't jeopardize your position or long-term goals. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Slow down, smell the roses and take a moment to rethink what you want to do next. Refuse to let anyone railroad you into a joint venture or investment that will require a cash donation. Be responsible, moderate and thoughtful. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Study what's changing around you, and you'll discover a way to morph your skills or services into something that is trending. A positive attitude will help you encompass friends, relatives or peers into whatever you pursue. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put more effort into fitness, health and being the best you can be. Refuse to get dragged into someone's dilemma or poke your nose where it doesn't belong. Make today about your accomplishments and happiness. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Leave nothing to chance. Go over every detail, then proceed. Use your imagination, and reach out to someone you want by your side. Take the initiative, and don't linger over unimportant matters. Personal growth and romance are in the stars. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Step back; if you act in haste, you will make a mistake. Domestic problems or indulgent behavior needs to be dealt with before you can bring about the changes you want to pursue. Pay attention to details, and avoid risk. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Look at what you can accomplish, and don't dwell on the impossible. Take a unique approach, and you'll find a way to make changes at home that will make your professional and personal responsibilities easier to fulfill. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Emotional spending will lead to regret. Work with what you have instead of making lavish purchases you don't need. An argument over the way you handle money will strain a relationship with someone who shares expenses with you. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Listen to reason when dealing with institutions or bureaucracy. Taking the necessary steps to ensure you don't have to redo something is in your best interest. A lack of patience or accuracy will result in disappointment or discord. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are brave, spontaneous and passionate. You are saucy and sweet.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

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EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		9	5	7	2	1		
	7						2	
5				3				4
7				4				9
2	4			1	6	8		7
3								1
1								6
	5			2			1	
		3	1	5	4	7		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 3/17

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

1	7	8	6	4	5	2	3	9
5	4	6	9	3	2	1	7	8
9	3	2	8	7	1	5	6	4
2	5	1	3	8	7	9	4	6
7	6	9	2	1	4	8	5	3
4	8	3	5	9	6	7	2	1
8	2	4	7	6	9	3	1	5
6	9	7	1	5	3	4	8	2
3	1	5	4	2	8	6	9	7

Difficulty Level ★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

GIVING BIRTH Solution: 12 letters

D	A	E	H	P	R	E	M	A	T	U	R	E	A	U
T	E	G	C	E	D	L	I	H	C	S	D	N	M	T
R	S	A	H	O	B	E	D	S	L	I	E	B	B	E
A	U	T	E	A	R	N	W	R	U	S	I	O	U	R
U	O	S	P	A	I	N	I	L	T	L	Y	M	L	I
M	P	C	O	T	R	G	F	H	I	S	Q	A	A	N
A	S	I	H	A	H	N	E	C	C	U	Ⓓ	T	N	E
T	L	G	S	I	R	T	A	X	I	V	Ⓡ	E	C	R
P	O	A	I	O	I	L	O	N	S	L	Ⓐ	R	E	U
F	M	R	B	S	C	P	T	L	U	I	Ⓦ	N	W	T
E	A	A	T	O	U	S	L	N	C	R	V	A	A	P
T	N	T	R	S	R	A	G	P	A	L	S	L	T	U
A	S	D	H	C	W	S	T	E	E	H	S	E	E	R
L	T	O	W	E	L	N	O	I	T	A	T	O	R	P
E	V	I	L	A	R	U	T	A	N	X	I	E	T	Y

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Alive, Ambulance, Anesthetist, Anxiety, Beds, Bishop, Born, Boys, Cervix, Child, Cigar, Cloth, Cramp, Father, Fetal, Fluid, Girls, Head, Labor, Lungs, Maternal, Midwife, Mother, Natural, Nursery, Pain, Pelvis, Premature, Push, Quints, Rotation, Rupture, Sheets, Slap, Spouse, Stage, Tear, Towel, Trauma, Umbilical Cord, Uterine, Wall, Ward, Water

Yesterday's Answer: Souvlaki

Treasuries 22 through 43 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Leonard, Clippers bounce back with win over Mavericks

AP

Los Angeles Clippers guard Paul George (13) attempts a layup as Dallas Mavericks forward Maxi Kleber (42) defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, March 15, 2021, in Dallas.

DALLAS (AP)—Kawhi Leonard and the Los Angeles Clippers answered a couple of low moments in their season — and kept rolling on the second night of back-to-backs.

Leonard scored 22 points, Marcus Morris Sr. added 14 in a rare start and the Clippers beat the Dallas Mavericks 109-99 on Monday.

The Clippers were playing Dallas for the first time since a 51-point blowout on their home court in December, and a night after a 20-point loss in New Orleans. The NBA's only remaining unbeaten team on the back end of consecutive games improved to 7-0 and tied Phoenix (7-1) for the most such victories.

"Back-to-backs test your manhood, test who you are and test your character," coach Tyronn Lue said. "I thought tonight we responded very well."

The second meeting—and first of two consecutive games in Dallas—since the Clippers beat the Mavericks in six games in a first-round series in the playoff bubble was a victory for LA's depth over the Mavericks' star power. The Clippers won for the second time in six games while Dallas lost for just the second time in its past seven.

Luka Doncic posted his ninth triple-double for Dallas, finishing with 25 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds. Kristaps Porzingis scored 22 points.

Paul George scored 15 as seven Clippers finished in double figures. Ivica Zubac had 15 points and 11 rebounds. Nicolas Batum, who sat while Morris made his third start of the season, had a couple of big 3-pointers and scored 14. Reggie Jackson and Patrick Patterson scored 12 apiece.

The Clippers built leads early in both halves with better defense than they displayed a night earlier against the Pelicans, who shot the highest percentage in the NBA this season at 65.4%.

The Mavericks erased a 14-point first-quarter deficit in the second quarter. But they trailed 55-50 at halftime after leading by a NBA-record 50 points (77-27) at the half in their 124-73 victory in LA in December.

"We know how they felt after how we beat them at their place," said Dallas guard Tim Hardaway, who scored 21 points. "You've got to give them credit. They came out aggressive. They put their foot down."

Dallas couldn't rally again after falling behind by 12 early in the fourth. The Mavericks trailed 103-99 with three minutes remaining but couldn't convert on two chances to get closer before Leonard got a three-point play off a putback.

Lakers 128, Warriors 97

In San Francisco, LeBron James had a triple-double with 22 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds, leading the injury-depleted Los Angeles Lakers past the Golden State Warriors 128-97 on Monday night.

Montrezl Harrell backed up James' fourth triple-double of the season by scoring 27 points off the bench on 11-of-14 shooting as the Lakers clinched the season series with Golden State.

Stephen Curry scored 27 points with four 3-pointers and became the Warriors' franchise assists leader a day after his 33rd birthday and in his 12th NBA season.

With a long list of injuries, the Lakers got another scare when Harrell briefly went down with 7:11 left in the first half. He took an elbow to the face from Warriors rookie center James Wiseman after his goaltend as he attempted to block a shot and had his elbows high. After a replay review to determine if it was "a hostile act," Wiseman received a technical foul, not a flagrant.

Harrell walked off the court on his own. Kyle Kuzma airballed the technical free throw — so, what happened?

Spurs 109, Pistons 99

In Detroit, Dejounte Murray had 19 points and 10 rebounds to lead a balanced attack as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Detroit Pistons 109-99 on Monday night.

The Spurs had lost three of four, including a 35-point loss to the Philadelphia 76ers on Sunday.

"I thought this was a nice bounce-back performance from our guys," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "We came out and did the things we needed to do."

Detroit's leading scorer, Jeremi Grant, left the game in the third quarter after falling hard on his hip while trying to drive between Drew Eubanks and Rudy Gay.

"He's fine," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "He probably could have come back and played if we had needed him, but I saw it as a good chance to get more minutes for our young guys."

Bucks 133, Wizards 122

In Washington, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 31 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his third consecutive triple-double to lead the Milwaukee Bucks past the Washington Wizards 133-122 Monday night for their fourth consecutive victory.

The Bucks pulled away late after letting a 26-point, third-quarter lead slip to five midway through the fourth. When the Wizards got within seven in the final minutes, Antetokounmpo scored the next four points to make it a double-digit game again.

"I'm not Kobe," Antetokounmpo said. "I just try to be a basketball player. I don't look at the clock and say, 'Oh now we are up two or we're down two, let me take over the game.' No, I just make the right decision at the right moment. Sometimes it's going to be score, sometimes it's going to be pass."

Antetokounmpo combined for 64 points, 26 rebounds and 21 assists in the two-game series at Washington that Milwaukee swept. The back-to-back NBA MVP also had 24 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists in the first triple-double of this run against the New York Knicks last week.

Suns 122, Grizzlies 99

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 27 points, Chris Paul added 18 and the Phoenix Suns rolled to a 122-99 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Monday night.

The Suns have won six of their past seven games and bounced back emphatically from a 122-111 loss to Indiana on Saturday. They won the season series against the Grizzlies two games to one.

Suns coach Monty Williams said he could sense a good game was coming.

"You could tell there was a tense-ness about our meeting this morning," Williams explained. "It's what I love about the group. To take that energy and focus and hold a team like that to 99 points. They're a top-10 defense and we hung up 122, which isn't easy to do. The focus was there."

Booker shot 10 of 19 from the field and topped his season average of 25 points per game despite sitting out the fourth quarter. Deandre Ayton added 15 points, nine rebounds and three blocks, while Jae Crowder scored 14.

Hornets 122, Kings 116

In Charlotte, N.C., Gordon Hayward saw the athletic De'Aaron Fox closing in on him out of the corner of his eye while driving for a breakaway basket, and he knew he had only one option: dunk it.

So Hayward leaped high and delivered a powerful two-handed dunk over Fox's outstretched arm, drawing a foul on a play that proved pivotal in the Charlotte Hornets' fourth straight win.

"I can still jump from time to time," the 30-year-old Hayward said with a smile.

Terry Rozier scored 26 points, Hayward added 25 and the Hornets overcame a 15-point deficit in the second half to beat the Sacramento Kings 122-116 on Monday night after trailing almost the entire game.

Fox led the Kings with 29 points, while Richaun Holmes had 17 points and 15 rebounds in a game in which Marvin Bagley III left early with a broken left hand.

Nuggets 121, Pacers 106

In Denver, Nikola Jokic notched his 35th double-double with 32 points and 14 rebounds, leading the Denver Nuggets over the travel-weary Indiana Pacers 121-106 on Monday night.

Michael Porter Jr. and Will Barton each scored 20 points for the Nuggets, who used a big fourth quarter to get the win.

Malcom Brogdon led Indiana with 24 and Justin Holiday had 19. Domantas Sabonis finished a rebound shy of a triple-double with 10 points and 10 assists.

The start of the game was moved back an hour because the Pacers were unable to fly from Phoenix into Denver until Monday afternoon. A snowstorm that officially dropped 27 inches at Denver International Airport closed the runways from late Sunday morning. Four runways were reopened mid-afternoon Monday.

Nets 117, Knicks 112

In New York, It was clear from the noise in the seats, even with only about 1,600 fans in attendance.

It was obvious from the emotion on the court, where Julius Randle had to be restrained by Knicks teammates after the buzzer following a call that went against him in the final seconds.

New York's basketball rivalry was alive and heated Monday night.

\"I got a little taste of it tonight," James Harden said.

Kyrie Irving scored 34 points and Harden posted his 10th triple-double of the season, leading the Brooklyn Nets to a 117-112 victory over the Knicks.

Harden finished with 21 points, 15 rebounds and 15 assists in his first game against the Knicks since arriving in Brooklyn two months ago and turning the Nets into one of the NBA's best teams.

Randle had 33 points, 12 rebounds and six assists, before a number of his teammates had to get off the bench to hold the All-Star forward back as he tried to get near the referees at midcourt.

Struggling Kings lose Bagley to broken left hand

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—The struggling Sacramento Kings were dealt another big blow when forward Marvin Bagley III broke his left hand in Monday's night's 122-116 loss to the Charlotte Hornets.

The Kings announced that an X-ray taken at the Spectrum Center after the game confirmed Bagley sustained a fracture of the fourth metacarpal in his left hand. Bagley will undergo further medical evaluation and an update regarding course of treatment will be provided in the coming days.

It's unclear how Bagley sustained the injury.

"I still just really feel for him," Kings coach Luke Walton said. "He's put in so much hard work this year. I've said all year long, he's continued to make really big strides and he was putting together a heck of a game tonight. We're going to miss him, miss him out there on the floor with us. We feel for him, but that's what being part of a team is about. We'll be there for him and we need to find a way to get some other players to step and try and fill in for what he was doing for us."

Bagley came into the game averaging 13.9 points and 7.6 rebounds. He had 12 points in 16 minutes against the Hornets.

Bagley played in just 13 games last season due to various injuries, including a broken right thumb.

"The guy has been playing really well, works his butt off and it's unfortunate, but that's part of it," said guard Tyrese Haliburton. "We have to figure it out. There's no magic potion to heal him, so we have to figure this out without him. He'll still be with us every day, cheering us on and being a great teammate."

The Kings (15-24) have lost 13 of their last 16 games.

With Brady's largesse, Bucs keeping title gang together

By BARRY WILNER
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

AP
Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady leaves the field an NFL divisional round playoff football game against the New Orleans Saints in New Orleans, in this Sunday, Jan. 17, 2021, file photo.

Tom Brady doesn't merely lead teams to Super Bowl wins on the field. He also helps keep together championship teams that have salary cap issues.

So sackmaster Shaq Barrett, fellow standout linebacker Lavonte David and old buddy Rob Gronkowski will remain in Tampa Bay.

Just as he had done several times in New England, Brady reworked his big-ticket contract last week to free up money in free agency. The Buccaneers used it to keep David, and on Monday, the first day of "legal tampering" before the NFL's business year begins on Wednesday, the 28-year-old Barrett agreed to a four-year, $72 million contract with $36 million guaranteed, agent Drew Rosenhaus confirmed.

Later in the day, Gronk agreed to return for his 11th season with Brady on a one-year, $10 million deal — up from the $9.25 million he earned in 2020.

Meanwhile, back in Brady's former stomping grounds, the Patriots were spending wildly in an attempt to recapture the glory he produced before heading south last season.

New England opened its vaults wider than any other team on Monday, something unusual for a club that normally avoids chasing the most expensive free agents. Of course, the Patriots went 7-9 without Brady in 2020.

Joining them are linebacker/edge rusher Matthew Judon from Baltimore; tight end Jonnu Smith from Tennessee; nose tackle Davon Godchaux from Miami; and defensive back Jalen Mills from Philadelphia.

Judon, 28, will get a four-year, $56 million pact with $32 million guaranteed, a person with knowledge of the contract told The Associated Press. Smith, 25, will be paid $50 million over four years to try to fill the void created when Gronkowski retired after the 2018 season — only to return last year to reunite with Brady in Tampa Bay.

The 26-year-old Godchaux gets $16 million for two years, with $9 million guaranteed. Mills, soon to turn 27, comes in at four years for $29 million, also guaranteed $9 million.

Clearly, the salary cap that decreased by about $16 million this year due to lost revenues because of the coronavirus pandemic hasn't prevented New England from diving headfirst into the free agency waters.

But they let perhaps the best offensive lineman in this crop get away, as 28-year-old guard Joe Thuney agreed to a five-year, $80 million contract with Kansas City. It might seem a stretch to think the Chiefs have problems on offense, but anyone who saw their line fall apart in the Super Bowl recognizes the value of adding Thuney.

The other three AFC West teams were busy as well.

The Raiders, who have suffered defensively since trading Khalil Mack in 2018, agreed to a two-year contract with edge rusher Yannick Ngakoue. They are last in the NFL with 66 sacks and 357 pressures, according to SportRadar, since the trade.

Ngakoue has the 12th-most sacks (45 1/2), third-most strip sacks (15), sixth-most quarterback pressures (190) and second-most forced fumbles (18) in his five pro seasons, though he has slumped the last two years.

The Chargers went with an offensive line upgrade, center Corey Linsley, an All-Pro with Green Bay last season. Linsley allowed a league-low four pressures last season among centers who played 13 or more games, while LA's Dan Feeney was tied for the most at 33. Linsley, 29, spent seven seasons with the Packers.

Los Angeles has also agreed to re-sign cornerback Michael Davis for three years.

Denver defensive end Shelby Harris agreed to a three-year, $27 million deal. The 29-year-old Harris played on a one-year deal last year after finding no suitors in free agency despite setting personal highs with 49 tackles, six sacks and nine passes defensed in 2019.

Elsewhere:

■ The Rams agreed with pass rusher Leonard Floyd on a four-year deal. Floyd, who is coming off the best season of his five-year NFL career, signed last April after the Bears released him. The outside linebacker finished 10th in the league with 10 1/2 sacks while racking up 55 tackles and 19 quarterback hits. He also excelled against the run while starting all 16 games.

■ Cleveland might have found a gem in Rams safety John Johnson III. The 25-year-old playmaker is a strong run defender who had four interceptions in 2018 and has eight over a career spanning 48 starts. His three-year deal with the Browns reportedly is valued at $33.75 million, with $24 million guaranteed.

■ San Francisco re-signed 29-year-old cornerback Jason Verrett for one year. He has been plagued by injuries throughout his career but stayed healthy in 2020 and excelled for the 49ers. Verrett started 13 games with two interceptions and seven passes defensed and was one of the top-graded cornerbacks in coverage.

■ Detroit brought back 25-year-old Romeo Okwara, who had a career-high 10 sacks last season in his third year with the Lions and fifth in the NFL. He has been a rare steady performer on a weak defense in Detroit and got a three-year deal.

■ Arizona re-signed linebacker Markus Golden for two-years. The 30-year-old Golden has spent most of his career with the Cardinals after being selected in the second round of the 2015 draft. He played with Arizona from 2015-18 before signing with the New York Giants and was traded back to the Cardinals midway through the 2020 season and played well in Arizona.

■ Baltimore agreed with guard Kevin Zeitler, 31, on a three-year, $22 million contract. The Ravens have needed help at the position since perennial All-Pro Marshal Yanda retired after the 2019 season. Zeitler, a nine-year veteran, was released by the New York Giants last week.

■ Jacksonville added Bears defensive lineman Roy Robertson-Harris with a three-year, $24.4 million deal that includes $14 million guaranteed. The Jaguars also grabbed safety Rudy Ford and receiver Jamal Agnew, both special teamers, as well as receiver Phillip Dorsett and running back Carlos Hyde. Defensive lineman Dawuane Smoot was retained.

■ The Jets, with as much money to spend as almost any team, went for Bengals defensive end Carl Lawson, Titans wide receiver Corey Davis and linebacker Jarrad Davis.

The 25-year-old Lawson got a three-year contract. He has 20 sacks in four seasons with weak Cincinnati and joins a promising defensive line in New York that includes defensive tackle Quinnen Williams.

Corey Davis, 26, could become the Jets' No. 1 wideout. His deal is worth $37.5 million over three years, $27.5 million guaranteed. Jarrad David had fallen out of favor in Detroit. The price tag reportedly is $7 million for one year.

■ Carolina addressed offensive line issues by agreeing to terms with Pat Elflein and Cameron Erving. Elflein received a three-year, $13.5 million deal with $6 million guaranteed, while Erving agreed to a two-year, $10 million contract with $8 million guaranteed.

■ The Cowboys are set to bring back defensive tackle Antwaun Woods and a pair of receivers lower on the depth chart in Cedrick Wilson and Noah Brown. The team reported on its website that Woods and Wilson were expected to be offered tenders as restricted free agents while Brown had agreed to a one-year contract as an unrestricted free agent.

Source: Raiders agree to 2-year contract with Ngakoue

By JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

The Las Vegas Raiders have agreed to a two-year contract with edge rusher Yannick Ngakoue in a deal they hope fills the void created by the Khalil Mack trade in 2018.

A person familiar with the deal says the two sides came to terms Monday on the first day teams could talk to potential free agents. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal can't be signed until the league year starts Wednesday.

ESPN reported the deal is worth $26 million.

The Raiders dealt Mack to Chicago three years ago and coach Jon Gruden has lamented how hard it is to find good pass rushers. The Raiders are last in the NFL with 66 sacks and 357 pressures, according to SportRadar, since the trade but now have added a piece that could solve those issues.

Ngakoue has been one of the more productive pass rushers in the NFL since entering the NFL as a third-round pick in 2016 with Jacksonville.

He joins Derrick Thomas, Aaron Donald and DeMarcus Ware as the only players to record at least eight sacks in each of their first five seasons and ranks near the top of the NFL in most pass-rushing stats over the past five seasons.

Ngakoue has the 12th-most sacks (45 1/2), third-most strip sacks (15), sixth-most quarterback pressures (190) and second-most forced fumbles (18) in his five seasons.

Ngakoue's production has fallen a bit the past two seasons with 55 pressures in 2019-20 after recording 102 combined in 2017-18.

Ngakoue was traded before last season from the Jaguars to Minnesota and then again to the Ravens during the season. Now he joins Las Vegas where he will be reunited with his first NFL head coach in Jacksonville in Raiders defensive coordinator Gus Bradley.

Ngakoue will likely take a starting spot across from 2019 fourth overall pick Clelin Ferrell, who has not been a productive pass rusher in his first two seasons. Maxx Crosby can fill a more situational role after 17 sacks the past two seasons.

The Raiders also announced that they signed former Pro Bowl left tackle Donald Penn to a one-day contract so he can retire with the team.

Penn made the Pro Bowl twice in five seasons with the Raiders and wanted to return to the franchise he grew up cheering for as a kid in Los Angeles.

Triple J Motors offers 2020 Mazda 3 as hole-in-one prize for NMC Foundation Golf Tournament

Triple J Motors has announced that it is offering a brand new 2020 Mazda 3 as a hole-in-one prize in the upcoming 16th Annual NMC Foundation Golf Tournament. The golf tournament is currently scheduled for Saturday, March 20, 2021, at the LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort.

Originally scheduled to happen in 2019, the tournament was canceled because of the impact of Super Typhoon Yutu and was rescheduled for March of 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the tournament to be postponed again.

"The NMC Foundation Golf Tournament raises funds that ultimately benefit student programs and services at Northern Marianas College," said Sean Ficke, Triple J Motors general manager. "Our company is proud to be part of this effort, and we look forward to a great game of golf on March 20.

"Triple J Motors, along with the other Triple J companies, continues to be one of the most ardent supporters of Northern Marianas College," said NMC interim president Frankie Eliptico. "We are extremely grateful for their contribution to this year's tournament and their support for all these years."

The NMC Foundation 16th annual open golf tournament will be held on the east course of the LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort. Showtime is at 6am and the shotgun start will be at 7am. The tournament will follow a medal play format. COVID-19 preventative measures will be followed and enforced at the tournament grounds.

NMC

Triple J Motors has announced that it is offering a brand new 2020 Mazda 3 as a hole-in-one prize in the upcoming 16th Annual NMC Foundation Golf Tournament. This year's tournament will be held on the east course of the LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort on March 20, 2021.

First place winners in the men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies Flights will each receive $500, while $300 and $200 will go to the second and third place finishers, respectively. Hole-in-one prizes also include two $5,000 hole-in-one prizes from McDonald's and Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc., as well as a 2020 Kia Soul from Joeten Motors. The tournament will also feature many other items such as raffle prizes like smartphones, hotel stays, meals, and much more.

The maximum number of golf players has been reached, therefore, registration is closed for this year's tournament. Interested players can still apply to be on the waitlist by emailing NMC Foundation coordinator Carla Sablan at carla.sablan@marianas.edu.

The college is asking companies, organizations, or individuals who are interested in sponsoring holes and/or for any in-kind or cash donation to help support the CNMI's post-secondary institution. For more information on how to become a sponsor, please call 237-6780. ***(PR)***

KHS

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championship round, original scoring is 5 points for first place, 3 points for second place, and 1 point for third place.

In the preliminary round of the 1,000m, KHS, SSHS, and MHS were neck-and-neck. MHS, however, advanced to the lead in the first go-around but lost speed at the turnaround point. KHS took advantage of the MHS' moment of weakness and effortlessly drifted through the turnaround point to take back the lead.

KHS completed the race in first place with a time of 06:52.38 followed by MHS who came in at 06:57.81, taking second place. SSHS came in last at 07:00 but were ultimately disqualified for that round.

KHS took an easy win in the preliminary round of the 500m dash, speeding through the course and completing it in 03:09.36. SSHS came in 3 seconds later at 3:12.44 followed shortly by MHS who came in at 03:13.66.

KHS improved on its time in the finals trimming its finishing time down to 03:02.82. MHS advanced against SSHS in the finals, finishing at 3:09.93. SSHS maintained its speed from the prelims, submitting a time of 03:12. 94.

The KHS co-ed paddling team consists of Alisa Gatharngeg, Jenisha Dubrall, Davin Kim, Danika Tagabuel, Megan Barnes, Wallis Bai, Clarissa Tagabuel, Kiara Nekaifes, Kata Iakopo, Noah Mesa, Elbert Pinaula, Christian Achas, Koen Kabriel, Jericho Jones, Jacoby Cabrera, Joedy Pinaula, Andrew Camacho, David Igisiar, Sebastian Muna, Max Cruz, Richard Cepeda, and Oliver Weilbacher.

KHS' men's paddling team also prevailed in last weekend's set of races and defended their championship title for the third year in a row.

MHS' women's paddling team crushed its opponents also last Saturday holding on to their title for their third consecutive championship.

The Public School System Student Support Services Athletic Program held the canoe series with assistance from Northern Marianas Paddle Sports.

SITCHON

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manageable than Tagaman given the requirement of having it in a more closed area instead of a large-scale area like they are used to.

"The Pacific Mini Games organizing committee is encouraging us to compress it, put it in a closed manageable area and we are going to listen to their requirements," he said.

Aside from Sitchon, other officers elected include Ronald Villafria as vice president, Jojo Valencia as treasurer, Ambet Omampo as secretary, Ricky Castro as secretary general, and Florence Antonio and Jay Diyco as board members.

They were all were sworn in at the Northern Marianas Sports Association office inside the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium in the presence of NMSA executive secretary Carlene Sablan.

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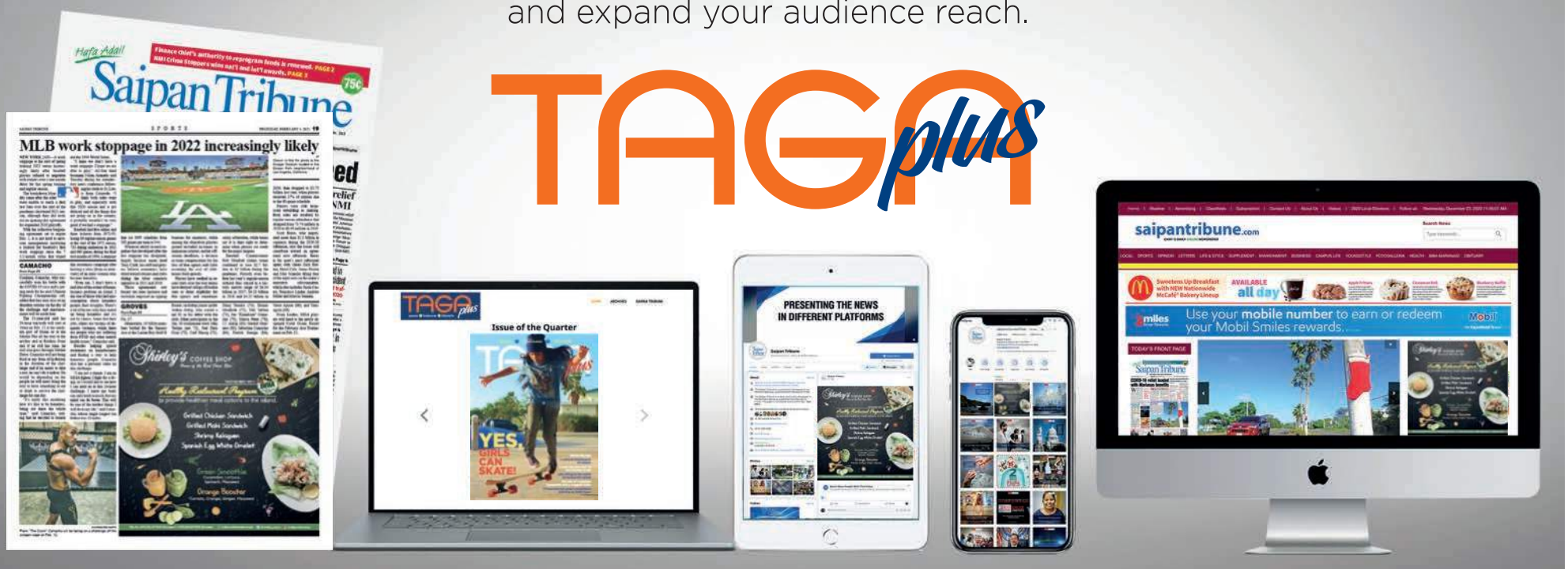
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Leonard, Clippers bounce back with win over Mavericks

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

With Brady's largesse, Bucs keeping title gang together

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KHS co-ed paddlers take title

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
The Kagman High School paddling team goes head-to-head against Saipan Southern High School in the final leg of the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic High School Canoe Series held last Saturday in the waters off Kilili Beach.

Sitchon named TRAC president

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

Former Triathlon Association of the CNMI vice president Manny Sitchon was elected the organization's new president just in time for the preparations of the upcoming 2022 Pacific Mini Games that will be held in the CNMI.

During the TRAC general membership meeting last Saturday, Sitchon said he is excited to head the organization that he has vested so much of his time and heart in.

"I am excited about it because I was one of the members of the original triathlon organizing group. Initially I was just a board member then moved up to vice president before I became president," he said.

Sitchon said that although TRAC has many projects in store one in particular stands out—the upcoming 2022 Pacific Mini Games.

"We are excited about our upcoming projects especially next year when the CNMI hosts the Pacific Mini Games. We are already coordinating with the committee from New Zealand. We had a Zoom meeting last week where we discussed the route we are going to take and we already gave them two options," he said.

Sitchon said the proposed routes include a route starting at the Pau Pau Beach where the organization holds its annual Saipan Aquathlon and the second route is on Beach Road where they host the Tagaman Triathlon.

Fortunately, Sitchon said aside from the organization having more than enough experience in hosting events triathlon events, the 2022 Pacific Mini Games will be more

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KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
Manny Sitchon, fourth from the right, poses for a photo following his election as the new Triathlon Association of the CNMI president last Saturday. He is joined in the photo by Northern Marianas Sports Association executive secretary Carlene Sablan and other officers and members of TRAC at the NMSA office inside the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
The Kagman High School co-ed paddling team poses for a photo following the championship tournament of the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic High School Canoe Series that concluded last Saturday.

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The Kagman High School's co-ed paddling team conquered its opponents to take home its first championship in the co-ed division of the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic High School Canoe Series that concluded last Saturday in the waters off Kilili Beach.

KHS nearly swept the final leg of the series last Saturday if they hadn't fallen short in the finals of the 1,000m. However, the Ayuyus still completed the season with a near perfect overall score of 74.

During the finals of the 1,000m, season's No. 2 seed Saipan Southern High School stole the win from under KHS in an attempt to redeem themselves from the preliminary round where they were disqualified for knocking over the flag at the turnaround point. The Manta Rays finished with an overall score of 42 points.

SSHS completed the final round of the 1,000m in 06:38.57 to earn 10 points closely followed by KHS who came in at 06:47.37, just a little less than 9 seconds behind, gaining 6 points. Marianas High School completed the race the latest at 07:01.05 to earn 2 points. MHS completed the season with an overall score of 26.

Points were doubled for the

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